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With best wishes

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Mayor.

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The Nature of Scripture

By A. S. PEAKE

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TO

MISS C. HARTLEY

MAYOR OF SOUTHPORT

TRUE DAUGHTER OF NOBLE PARENTS

FIRM FRIEND OF THE SUFFERING AND THE WEAK

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

IN ADMIRATION OF EMINENT PUBLIC SERVICE

IN COMMEMORATION OF HIGH CIVIC DIGNITY

IN MEMORY OF A LONG AND VALUED FRIENDSHIP

Preface

THIS volume contains a collection of papers and lectures mainly concerned with the nature and value of Scripture as it appears to a student who combines an acceptance of critical method with a loyal adhesion to the evangelical faith. Most of the papers included were written for Conferences; but the two Deansgate Lectures and the sermon on *The Record of Revelation* have been reproduced from shorthand reports of extempore utterances, and it has seemed undesirable to obliterate the traces of this origin. I have to thank my old friend Mr. Cradock-Watson for the cordial permission to reprint *The Teaching of Scripture as Determined by the Nature of Scripture*, and the authorities of the recent Ecumenical Methodist Conference for similar permission to reprint the second paper on *The Modern Criticism of the Bible*. The publishers have kindly

consented to the reprinting of the second paper on *The Permanent Value of the Old Testament*, delivered in 1907 to the National Free Church Council at Leeds, and *The Verification of Revelation in Experience* from my book *The Bible: its Origin, its Significance and its Abiding Worth*. Both of these addresses seemed necessary to complete the structure of the present volume. The final paper falls outside the scope indicated by the title of the volume; but I trust it may not appear really irrelevant to my purpose.

The recent course of discussion has suggested that the publication of this volume might serve a useful purpose. The advocates of traditional theories on the Bible have been stirred to new efforts. It must be said with regret that these have in some instances been marred by a painful absence of Christian temper and the courtesies of controversy, and by a lack of that scrupulous fairness and accuracy of statement which is the first essential in debate. Heated language, an acrimonious temper, and reckless misrepresentation, however effective with partisans, will in the long

run only recoil on those who indulge in such tactics.

The reasons for rejecting the traditional view of the Bible [1] and for accepting what may for convenience be called the critical view, have been placed before the public in a large number of works during the last forty years. The "secret propaganda," of which we are sometimes accused, is the creation of a fevered imagination. Our zeal in advocating critical method and results is due partly to our desire that the Bible may be better understood, partly to our wish to win or retain for the faith those to whom the old view of the Bible has become incredible and who are told that its surrender involves the abandonment of Christianity. We feel that Scripture is likely to be effectively discredited by the claim that it must satisfy tests which, in the judgment of an increasing number of devout students, who gladly recognize it as the record of Divine revelation, it assuredly does not meet. So far as criticism is dominated by rationalism or

[1] For a description of this see pages 81 f,, 199–201, 251 f., 255–257.

seeks to dissolve those historical facts which are vital to the very existence of Christianity, so far I also disavow it. The only criticism for which I care is the criticism which has an open eye for the actual phenomena of Scripture, and so great a reverence for truth as to accept the conclusions to which those phenomena direct us. In theories of Scripture spun by the human imagination, working under the impulse of false reverence, and imposed on the facts rather than drawn from them, I have long lost all belief.

The antagonism to criticism has its roots largely in the erroneous expectation with which Scripture is approached. Men come to it with their theory of it ready-made; and because they radically misunderstand its nature, they make claims for it which cannot be substantiated, but, at the same time, largely fail to appreciate the greater and deeper things it has to offer. Critical investigation is, as such, neither friendly nor hostile to the literature it examines. It is an attempt to do impartial justice to the phenomena it discovers. And its well-tested results must be taken into account

when the general theory of Scripture is formulated.

What then is our duty to a student of Scripture, who is convinced that the critical view is sound in principle and largely correct in results, but at the same time sincerely accepts the Christian faith? Must we allow him to be misled by those who assure him that he is occupying contradictory positions and who take the risk of forcing him to abandon his Christianity if they fail to persuade him that his critical conclusions are untrue? We cannot decline the duty of challenging such perilous counsels. We are wholehearted believers in the Christian religion; we are assured beyond all misgiving that the traditional view of the Bible has broken down; we earnestly desire to strengthen distressed and wavering faith; we offer a conception of revelation, which we regard as true to the characteristics of Scripture, while it does not compromise the sincerity or retrench the fullness of our evangelical belief. From the determination to go forward with our task we shall not be moved by censorious judgments, nor will they

dim our assurance that it is of Divine appointment.

As a contribution to the fulfilment of this mission I have collected these papers. On most of the problems I stated my position in my book on the Bible, where this had not already been done in *Christianity: its Nature and its Truth.* But a volume of five hundred pages is too formidable for many whom I desire to help; moreover it covers a larger field than that traversed in the present work. And I hope that the very fact that the same set of problems is handled again and again, from different points of approach and with different presentation, may by dint of repetition leave the theory of Scripture I seek to establish firmly fixed in the reader's mind. If this is accomplished, the legitimacy and indeed the necessity of criticism follows of itself. It will then, I trust, be realized that there is no necessary incompatibility between faith and criticism, but that each may support and enrich the other.

December 12, 1921.

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The Modern Criticism of the Bible. I[1]

1 FEW features in the theological situation are more striking than the change which has come over the attitude towards the Bible. This is by no means entirely due to modern criticism. Other departments of Biblical study have had their share in it ; and investigations in anthropology, archæology, and the physical and biological sciences have contributed greatly to the result. As illustrations of this, I may refer to the difficulties raised in connexion with the Hebrew conception of the universe, the antiquity of man, the stories of the Creation, the Fall, and the Deluge, the ages attained by the patriarchs.

[1] Read at the National Free Church Council, Cheltenham, March 6th, 1912.

Then there are the moral difficulties, such as the temper of the vindictive Psalms, or the acts of savagery, committed by the alleged order of God. The study of Comparative Religion has brought to light the prevalence of institutions and beliefs similar to those we find in the Bible, but of much greater antiquity. An unprejudiced exegesis has discredited the argument from prophecy in its traditional form, and forced the interpreter to discard the New Testament use of the Old as his standard for interpreting the latter. The science of Biblical Theology has made it clear that it is not with one system of theology set forth with greater or less clearness, and with more or less ample detail, that we have to do, but with different points of view and divergent presentations. I have no wish to minimise the difference which criticism has made; but it is only right to remember that these other factors have contributed greatly to the change of

attitude. And we cannot forget that the claim to authority in every department is being rigidly scrutinised, and that nothing is too sacred for its value to be judged by its intrinsic worth.

It is inevitable that any statement as to assured results will be met with contradiction. In the brief space at my disposal it is obviously impossible to deal with the subject in a controversial way ; but I must express my own conviction, which rests on an examination of the evidence in the light of the best statements for and against the critical view, that if the question is to be settled by unprejudiced examination of the documents themselves, apart from considerations imported from a foreign region, results have been reached of far-reaching significance, which the progress of research is not likely to overturn. For many of these results the opinion of experts is almost unanimous, where theological bias has not controlled the critical

faculty. I am far from saying that any special science can refuse the challenge that its conclusions must stand the test of adjustment to our ultimate conception of the universe. And this applies to criticism as to other sciences. But within its own domain it has the right to work by its own laws and reach its own results, without submitting to the demand that its results shall conform to a standard imposed from the outside.

Ideally criticism should occupy a position of neutrality and detachment towards all alien interests. It is neither hostile nor friendly to the documents it examines; it holds no brief for faith, nor is it inspired by animus against it. It is a passionless inquiry controlled simply by the desire to ascertain the truth through the application of rigid scientific method. I do not of course forget that in actual practice it is not so impersonal as I have described. The sphere in which it operates is not

like that of the mathematician, where the same results must be attained by all competent inquirers, whatever the difference in their general outlook. In history and in criticism there is nothing corresponding to the calculating machine; and on the same data it frequently happens that critics will reach very divergent results. And we must allow for bias which deflects the judgment in favour of the desired conclusion, and remember that those who most loudly complain of bias in others often exhibit a bias of their own. Critical method is best practised in the first instance on literature with which our religious interests are not bound up, inasmuch as our judgment is then unaffected by any anxiety as to our conclusions. But those who have to learn criticism from its application to our sacred books should be on their guard against the invasion of illegitimate postulates. It is a trite saying that the Bible must be studied just as any

other book. And those are not its truest friends who claim an immunity for it from a method universally employed by students of secular literature and history. Indeed, the higher our conception of Scripture, the deeper our sense of its inestimable value, the more anxious we ought to be to base our study of it on a rigidly tested foundation.

What, then, do we mean by criticism? We understand in this connexion not the æsthetic appreciation of the literary qualities of Scripture, but the scientific investigation of the problems raised concerning the origin, the structure, the date and authorship, the text of our sacred writings, the growth of the Canon and the limits to be assigned to it, and the historical accuracy of the records it includes. We are concerned with Lower or, as it is more commonly called, Textual Criticism, which, from a laborious examination of the manuscripts and versions, establishes

their mutual relations, classifies them into groups, constructs a genealogy of the groups, forms a judgment as to the types of text, and then, by a combination of external with internal evidence, decides in any given case which reading should be adopted, or, where the true reading seems not to have been preserved, attempts to restore it by conjecture. We pass from the Formal to the Material as we pass from Lower to Higher Criticism. The critic is now concerned not with restoring the documents to their original form but with the examination of the history of the documents themselves. Where external evidence is available, great weight is naturally attached to it, but over large areas, especially in the Old Testament, the critic is practically confined to the documents. They give their testimony to those who are sufficiently skilled to read it. The critic searches for historical allusions, which enable him to fix the

date of the document as a whole, then he attempts to discover whether it incorporates earlier material. If so, he seeks to get behind the document to the sources which it has incorporated and, so far as may be possible, to reconstruct those sources. This is an indispensable preliminary to a scientific Historical Criticism.

An examination, valuation, and chronological arrangement of documents must precede their employment as sources for history; and in particular, for the most important thing of all in this connexion, we must place our documents in the true order if we are to trace the growth of Biblical religion. Historical Criticism investigates first the qualifications and the qualities of the various writers and their sources, where such can be discovered, as historical authorities; and secondly examines the historical character of the events they describe. The practical value of Historical Criticism lies in this, that the

Biblical revelation has been conveyed by historical channels. A knowledge of the history is therefore essential if we would understand the revelation.

The statement of results, even in the most moderate form, is bound to elicit the protest that we are simply championing a set of opinions already on the way to the lumber-room, where the dust of ages gathers on discarded absurdities. The reproach of rationalistic origin, the veto of archæology, the stampede of the Assyriologists, are all held to portend the collapse of the crazy structure of Old Testament criticism, which indeed has been suspected for a number of years of growing top-heavy. It is not because the critics are too deaf to hear these ill-omened words, or too perverse to pay them heed, that they hold on their way; but because they are persuaded that their main results rest on a secure foundation, and that the assaults directed against them have failed.

It is not uncommon to meet with allusions to "the cobweb theories of the so-called Higher Criticism." But even cobwebs are not spun out of nothing, and they are admirably designed to gain the end in view. And similarly critical theories are not, as a rule, fanciful deductions from fictitious premises.

The task of criticism is to observe and register the phenomena of its documents, and to construct a theory to account for them. If the phenomena are simple, a simple theory will account for them; if complex, a complex theory will be required to do them justice. It is not necessarily a valid objection to a theory that it is elaborate. When the wards of the lock are intricate, the key must be intricate to match them. Now, it is undeniable that critical investigation has, at any rate, brought a large number of facts to light, which older scholars had ignored or explained away. And so far, at least,

it has rendered conspicuous service. But it is possible either for facts to be discovered under the stimulus of a previously accepted theory, or for the theory to be suggested by the facts. One may suspect that but for the Hegelian philosophy the Tübingen theory would hardly have come into existence. The New Testament and early Christian literature would not have given rise to it, though naturally the theory could have made no way if it had not been possible to point to a number of facts which appeared to support it. But the collapse of the theory is an impressive warning against the danger of formulating a theory as to what the facts must have been, and then examining the documents for facts to support it. I call attention to this case not only for its intrinsic interest, but because it is often used to point the moral that a similar fate awaits the dominant critical theory of the Pentateuch. But not only are the conditions of Old

and New Testament criticism so different that an inference from one to the other is very precarious, but the criticism of the Pentateuch has followed the line of true scientific research.

In other words, the hypothesis has been suggested by the facts, which a scrutiny of the literature has brought to light. So far from being a ready-made hypothesis, brought to the documents, it grew by slow and tentative stages, moving with reluctance farther and farther away from its starting-point in tradition. And so with the criticism of the Synoptic Gospels. The commonly accepted Two-document theory was the outcome of a similarly elaborate process of investigation. And in each case the result has been that scholars have accepted the result with ever-growing unanimity; whereas the Tübingen criticism was, even in its palmiest days, rejected by some of the most eminent New Testament scholars; and it became more and

more apparent as time went on that the problem of the transition from primitive Christianity to the Old Catholic Church was more complex than it had imagined, and that its critical criteria were altogether too narrow. The more deeply the New Testament was studied and the more phenomena were discovered which the theory was incompetent to explain, the more it became clear that there were other factors co-operating in the process of which it made little or nothing.

Turning now for a moment to estimate the present position, I should say that so far as the Old Testament is concerned there is a marked agreement among critics as to the main issues. There is no real sign of a reaction, and the new lines which have been opened up, whether by the Pan-Babylonists or by Eerdmans, lead in directions even more alien from tradition. At present I know of nothing which warrants the opinion that the recognition of the

composite character of the Pentateuch and presence in it of four main documents, the dating of the Deuteronomic Code in or not long before the reign of Josiah, and of the Priestly Code after Ezekiel, the composite character of the historical books and much of the prophetic literature, the post-exilic origin of large portions of the Hagiographa, will be abandoned by any considerable number of experts.

In the case of the New Testament it is more difficult to speak of any general consensus of opinion covering the whole ground. The very late dates for many of the books have been largely abandoned even in cases where traditional views of authorship are still repudiated. The authenticity of the Pauline Epistles, apart from the Pastorals, is widely recognised, though several scholars reject Ephesians, several reject 2 Thessalonians, and a few reject Colossians. The view that Mark is the earliest of our Synoptists and, along with a collection of

sayings and discourses of Jesus, formed the basis for Matthew and Luke, is very widely accepted. The Lucan authorship of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles is still very generally denied in Germany, in spite of Harnack's elaborate vindication. At present we are far from agreement with reference to the Catholic Epistles, the Revelation of John and, above all, the Fourth Gospel. Nor, even where books are reclaimed for traditional authors or pushed back to earlier dates, does it mean that their historicity is freely recognised. In other words, a more conservative Higher Criticism does not always involve a more conservative Historical Criticism.

It may, however, be said that what people really want to know is the answer to the question, how far criticism affects our estimate of the Bible, our use of it, the value we attach to it, the trust we repose in it. A few brief suggestions are all that can be added at the close of a paper.

It is well in the first place never to forget the fact that, whatever criticism may do or fail to do, the Bible itself remains. No matter what view we take as to the way in which it has been produced, here it is—a stupendous fact in literature, in history, in morals, and in religion. From its pages the collective consciousness of the Church, as well as the individual Christian, has heard the Divine voice speaking, and the fact that in this book as in no other God has disclosed Himself to us is attested by evidence which no criticism is competent to touch.

In the next place, while it is not right to speak smooth things or minimise the results of criticism, we must avoid exaggeration. Many things, and those not the least important, criticism leaves much as they were. On numerous points the critics cordially accept tradition. Even where they diverge from it on questions of authorship, structure, or date, the spiritual value

often remains largely or entirely undiminished. Where the writer speaks the language of the eternal, the truth and power of the utterance are lifted above the limitations of space and time. Does the twenty-third or the fifty-first Psalm lose in spiritual value if we assign it to an unknown poet? Does the great prophecy of Israel's restoration, with its deep and wonderful songs of the Suffering Servant, lose when we recognise that an unknown prophet has written it? Is the Epistle to the Hebrews less valuable than if it had come from the hand of Paul? Or is the glowing faith of the Apocalyptist in the triumph of God's Kingdom less inspiring if we refuse to claim it for the son of Zebedee? Once more, we are, I believe, strategically in a much better position for defending the Bible against its enemies, if we cordially accept the main results of criticism. I should, for example, find it much more difficult to defend the

Divine origin of the Hebrew legislation, with all the divergences within the legislation itself, on the traditional view that the laws were given to Israel by Moses than on the critical theory which finds three stages reflected in the Law, and explains the differences as due to revision of it in adjustment to new situations. And many of the objections which played so large a part in the Secularist attack on the Bible derived their cogency from the traditional theory of the Bible, and have become largely irrelevant and pointless for those who have abandoned it.

The objections which are often felt to the critical theory largely rest, I believe, on erroneous conceptions of what the Bible must be. Partly it is approached from too modern and Western a point of view, and standards are applied to it which would not have seemed reasonable to an ancient Oriental. Partly justice has not been done to the fact that Scripture

is the record of an historical process spread over many centuries, starting from lowly origins and moving by slow degrees to its culmination in Christ and the interpretation of His Person and Work given in the New Testament. No doubt the ultimate question about criticism is not, Have we gained or lost by it? but, Is it true or false? That it is true along the lines which I have indicated I do not doubt; but neither do I doubt that the loss is outbalanced by the gain. For criticism has enabled us for the first time to recover the true history of that process; to vindicate for the Old Testament its permanent value by the side of the New, and to read the New more truly through our fuller understanding of the Old.

The Modern Criticism of the Bible. II [1]

2 At the outset I desire to state my personal convictions about the Bible, that what I say of Biblical Criticism may be set against the right background, and be seen in the right perspective, and from the right point of view. While there is a Light which lighteth every man, and God has never left Himself without witness among the Gentiles, there was in Israel, from the origin of the nation onwards, an action of God, unique in quality and intensity, consciously directed to a climax, which it attained in the Incarnation, the life and

[1] An address delivered at the Methodist Œcumenical Conference, held in London, September, 1921. Several passages are restored which had to be removed for lack of time.

ministry, the death and resurrection of His only-begotten Son. Of this unique Divine action the Old and the New Testaments contain an adequate record and interpretation, and are thus the classical documents of our religion. Inasmuch as Jesus recognised this Divine element in Israel's history, and claimed to stand in continuity with it, there is an organic connexion between the Old Testament and the New which assures the Old Testament its place in the Christian Canon. Since, in gracious condescension, God took the Hebrews as they were, and through their history slowly disclosed Himself, and fashioned His chosen people to be the medium of revelation, we may anticipate that in the Old Testament, which is the record of this interaction of Divine and human factors, much will be preserved which is not in harmony with the loftier reaches of revelation in the Old Testament itself, still less with that vouchsafed to us in the Person and Work of

Christ. While these lower levels of revelation are in the nature of the case not final, and cannot be authoritative for us, their preservation in the Old Testament enables us to grasp the processes through which Divine wisdom ordained that the knowledge of God should be revealed.

Like every other document or set of documents of antiquity, the Bible requires criticism. The text is purified of errors by Lower Criticism. Dates, authorship, analysis, are determined by Higher Criticism ; while Historical Criticism tests the competence and trustworthiness of the historians, and estimates the value of the story they tell, or seeks by comparisons of various versions to work back to an earlier form. A critical theory is an attempt to do justice to the phenomena disclosed in the study of documents. That is the best theory which furnishes the best explanation of all the facts that have to be taken into account. While the critical method

is the same for sacred as for secular writings, and while what is legitimate for the Old Testament cannot be illegitimate for the New, there are differences in the two cases which make it desirable at some points to treat them separately.

It may be well at this point to refer to some misapprehensions of criticism. Biblical criticism, as such, is not due to Rationalism or to rejection of Christianity, or to human arrogance which dares to sit in judgment on the utterances of God and to know better than Christ. On the contrary, the main results of Old Testament criticism are accepted by many scholars who believe that miracles have actually happened; stake their own hopes of salvation on the truth of the Christian religion; confess with full and thankful hearts the Divinity of Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the supreme and final Revealer of God to man, the all-sufficient Reconciler of man to God.

Nor is it true that the generally accepted results of criticism are cobwebs spun by the enemy of souls, or glittering soap-bubbles blown by intellectual vanity, luring men to their ruin. Nor have they been dictated by the a priori assumption that history must have gone on the lines laid down beforehand by Hegelian philosophy or a theory of evolution borrowed from biology. They rest on a number of phenomena actually present in the documents themselves which the traditional view fails to explain. These phenomena may, to a large extent, be verified by any person of intelligence, provided he does not follow the precedent of Galileo's opponents and refuse to look through the telescope. Even were the critical theory wrong or defective, the facts would still remain to be explained. The traditional view would not be rehabilitated, but would share in the judgment passed on other rejected theories; and so far as the phenomena

remained unexplained, we should be driven to devise new hypotheses, which would cover the facts more adequately.

But, in the main, scholars are convinced that the dominant critical theory of the Old Testament provides a reasonably adequate account of those things which call for explanation. The assertion that Hegelianism or a philosophical theory of evolution is responsible for the Grafian theory is more plausible than sound. As a matter of fact, its main thesis was first hit upon by a Biblical scholar who was himself quite innocent of Hegelian tendencies, and it has been accepted by many scholars equally detached from philosophical prejudices. The charge would be more warranted with reference to the Tübingen criticism of the New Testament, though it must, in fairness to Baur, be recognised that he himself regarded his theory as suggested by a study of the Epistles to the Corinthians. Moreover,

the Tübingen theory had only a very partial acceptance at any time among New Testament scholars. As time went on, its influence dwindled till it was universally abandoned. The Grafian theory enjoyed no early popularity, and for long had the critical opinion of Germany solid against it, and was finally accepted only because the accumulated mass of evidence forced critics to accept it, almost against their will. Nor have critical theories been discredited by exploration or excavation, nor is it true that the pillar on which the whole critical fabric rests has been undermined by the demonstrated inferiority of the Hebrew text to the Septuagint in the transmission of the Divine names. In spite of statements to the contrary, it still remains true that archæological investigation has not really confirmed positions contested by sober and responsible critics. It is one of the ironies of controversy that some who pose as zealous

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defenders of the Bible from cover to cover hail the attempts to discredit the Hebrew text because it is alleged that the Greek variants render the differences in the use of the Divine names too uncertain a clue to analysis. A drowning cause will clutch at any straw, but it will not thereby avert or postpone the inevitable end. Even in its least extravagant form the hypothesis of the untrustworthiness of the Hebrew text in this respect in comparison with the Septuagint is grossly improbable. But even were it otherwise, it would make no substantial difference, for the microscopical scrutiny of the Pentateuch during the last hundred and fifty years has brought to light a large number of other phenomena, mutually independent and converging on the same result. Under this irresistible pressure the abler and more candid defenders of tradition have been forced to make a number of important concessions. This demonstrates that there are real facts to

be explained, and that the critical case does not hang on gossamer threads. But this reluctant tribute to its cogency is far below what the facts demand.

It must of course be recognised that the problems of Higher Criticism in the Old Testament, that is, of date, authorship, and the analysis of composite works, raise much slighter issues than those presented by Historical Criticism, which estimates the trustworthiness of the historical writers and investigates the accuracy of the stories they record. And the gravity of the issues is greatly intensified when we pass to the New Testament and, in particular, to the Gospel story. For here nothing less than the existence of Christianity itself is at stake. It is obviously conceivable that results might be reached, which would imperil those elements in our religion, which are indispensable and vital. For Christianity is not one of those religions which are independent of history. It

grew out of a religion in which history played an essential part. It was itself from the first indissolubly associated with, and indeed largely constituted by, certain events in space and time. The Founder is an integral element in the religion. If He is eliminated from it, its character is radically transformed. Could it be demonstrated that Jesus never lived, or granted that He lived, could it be proved that we knew little about Him; if the Cross turned out to be a fiction, or if indeed Jesus was crucified, but that was the end of Him, Christianity in any tenable sense could hardly survive. Much that was precious and incomparable would be left to us in the portrait of a character, ideal though imaginary, and the priceless expression of spiritual and moral truth; yet the heart of the religion, both His revelation and redemption, would have been cut out of it. For it is not in the sayings apart from the speaker, nor in

the presentation of a fictitious character, that the charm and power of the Gospel, its authority and its triumph, really reside. The supreme contribution which Jesus made to religion was Jesus Himself, His personality, His achievement. In that human life God translated Himself from the speech of eternity into the speech of time. And in the work Jesus accomplished He unsealed the springs of redemptive energy, the springs of cleansing and forgiveness, of power and of peace. No wonder, then, if many Christians, dreading radical results, refuse to admit the right of criticism to operate in these vital regions, where its surgery might be fatal to the patient's life.

But this way of escape is not really open to us. If historical facts are necessary to our religion we cannot evade the challenge—Did these facts really happen or not? Where history gains admission, the door cannot be slammed in the face of

criticism. Indeed, we welcome the keenest scrutiny of the credentials our religion presents. The appeal to experience to demonstrate the historicity of events in the distant past is vain. For experience assures us of states of consciousness which we enjoy and of effects visible in our life. It cannot, in the nature of the case, prove even the historicity of Jesus, still less the details of His career. At most it can combine with historical investigation to assure us of the truth of the story. History must be examined by critical investigation.

Nor can we escape by detaching Christianity from history. To concentrate our attention and emphasis on the religious and moral ideas, and argue that it does not matter whether Jesus ever lived or died, is to abandon what is of supreme value in the religion. And we do not really save Christianity from hostile criticism in this way. We sacrifice the facts to save the ideas, only to find that philosophy attacks

the ideas when we have robbed them of the guarantee of the facts.

We must then accept the risks of history and run the gauntlet of historical criticism. But this is abundantly worth while, for the historical element secures the supreme and imperishable wealth of Christianity as a religion at once of revelation and redemption. That God's own nature and character was once exhibited in a perfect human life means that we may know God's inmost nature, no longer by abstract description, but in the most concrete and vivid way. That the Son of God made our nature and experience His own, bore the uttermost strain of our temptations, and sounded all the depths of our pain and sorrow, yields us the inexpressible consolation that He is qualified to be our sympathetic Helper in our own hours of conflict and tragedy. That He accepted to the full the consequences of the sin of His brethren, even to the consciousness

of that separation from God which is sin's most terrible sequel, won for us deliverance from the guilt and domination of sin. That He triumphed over death is the assurance of our own immortality.

That the difficulties with which historical criticism confronts us in the Gospel narrative are really serious is not to be denied. But we are not entitled to assert that these difficulties ought not to have been there. All we can properly ask is that we should have enough for a firm foothold and solid ground beneath our feet, as faith treads the narrow and perilous path which leads us through time to eternity. The venture of faith is warranted, since historical inquiry, combined with the experience of redemption, leaves us a margin of security which, if too narrow for our desires, is yet enough for our needs.

It is the fact that history, whether of the nation or the individual, has been God's chosen medium of revelation which

makes criticism, not merely a right we may exercise at our pleasure, but a duty which we are not at liberty to neglect. Since that revelation was given through history we must know the history that we may understand the revelation. For we understand it aright only as we retrace the processes by which it was given. We must accordingly investigate the sources of our information, free the text from corruption, disentangle documents of different periods, arrange them in their chronological order, and thus follow the whole Divine movement from beginning to end.

It might have pleased God to choose a way less difficult for us, a way which we should have expected Him to choose, had we been unaware of the way He has actually taken. For no one definitely knows what the precise limits of the Canon are; and corruption has been suffered to run riot in the transmission of the text. Our commentaries illustrate the uncer-

tainties of interpretation on almost every page of Scripture. Uncertainties of interpretation are often most thickly concentrated where the importance of the subject-matter is at its height. We ask why He chose a method of revelation so incidental and unsystematic; why, refusing short-cuts and direct easy roads, He moved so leisurely and by such devious ways to His goal; why so much has been allowed to remain ambiguous and obscure. How much better it would have been, we are tempted to say, if our sacred Scripture had been a short, compact, lucid handbook of doctrine and ethics, given from the first, and all at once, and available for all mankind, with no difficulties, no uncertainties, no possibility of error in the transmission of the text, or the determination of its extent; with no ambiguities in expression and the consequent possibility of divergence in interpretation, with no problems of date or authorship or structure or historic

accuracy; all on the same level in its religious and moral teaching.

Such is the kind of revelation we might have expected God to give. But His ways are not our ways, and the fact that He selected one form and method of revelation rather than another is of deep significance which we are not entitled to disregard. The revelation was given bit by bit to a puny people in a tiny country, passing by great empires, teeming multitudes, advanced civilisations. By a great act of redemption God took that people for His own, patiently subdued it, intractable though it was, to be the instrument of His purpose; gradually through its history He taught the nation to know Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. Then He rose to higher levels than a revelation co-extensive with the whole nation could attain, and found His medium in the experience of chosen individuals, through whom the religion gained in richness and

depth, in purity and intensity, in keenness of insight, in quickness of understanding, in delicacy of expression, in sensitiveness of response to the Divine truth.

Then the final revelation became possible. It was given not piecemeal or through a purely human medium, whether national or individual, but through God's only-begotten Son, who became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The whole process of God's self-unfolding and self-imparting to man might have been carried through without resort to writing; but entrusted to the capricious action of human memory, exposed to alterations due to human preferences and antipathies, it would, as time went on, have been changed out of recognition, mutilated, distorted, disfigured, by foreign excrescences. But the Holy Spirit moved men to write that record, and He moved men to give us its interpretation. And these are enshrined for us in our sacred Scriptures. Thus we

stand not for elegant extracts or purple passages, but for the Bible as a whole; a whole greater than the sum of its parts, for it is all linked together in an organic unity; not, indeed, the unity of a single point of view, but the unity of a process steadily moving upwards by degrees till the partial revelations through the Prophets were crowned by the final revelation in a Son.

The Permanent Results of Biblical Criticism[1]

THE subject which has been assigned to me is one of so large a range that it can be touched only in the most geenral and allusive way. The nineteenth century was pre-eminently the era of criticism. The critical and historical method was not wholly new even as applied to the sacred literature of Christendom; but it was exercised with unprecedented thoroughness, with detachment from dogmatic control, with instruments of finer and finer precision, handled with a dexterity becoming ever more skilled by practice. No tradition was too sacred for relentless investigation, no belief too cherished to

[1] Read at the Methodist Œcumenical Conference at Toronto, on Monday, October 9, 1911.

claim exemption from challenge. The process naturally evoked anger and violence, pain and dismay, among those who felt that the critic's knife cut at the very vitals of their religion. But through fierce storms of resentment or clouds of misrepresentation the critic followed the star that he might find his way to Bethlehem and bring his gifts and his worship to the shrine of Truth. For if we may rightly deplore the iconoclastic temper which was too often shown and the new dogmatism which guided his quest and prejudiced his results, it is the barest justice to admit that the critical movement was animated above all by a sincere desire to discover truth. When it was true to its own principles it was free from animus of every kind, it went its own way of impartial inquiry, indifferent whether it helped or hindered the cause of faith. And justly, for if investigation is to be scientific it must be free and not deliberately conducted to reach a given

goal. Yet it must not be forgotten that criticism is a special science, and while it must be granted autonomy within its own domain, we have to check and combine its results with the results of other lines of inquiry before we reach that complete rounded view in which a due place is accorded to all the facts of which account must be taken.

The wrath and dismay which criticism occasioned were largely due to its negative aspect and the uncertainty in which everything seemed to be involved. Whether it was in the Lower Criticism which sought to restore the true text of Scripture; or the Higher Criticism which attempted to determine the problems of date and authorship, to analyse composite documents into the elements of which they were composed and thus go behind the literature we possess to its sources; or Historical Criticism which estimated first the qualities of the historians and their qualifications for their

task and then appraised the historical worth of the documents themselves ; there was always a sense of uneasiness aroused by the mere fact that so much which had seemed secure now appeared unsettled. It was as if the solid rock was changing into a quaking morass. The text of Scripture for which infallibility had so often been claimed was shown to be subject in multitudes of instances to serious uncertainties. Many books were denied to the authors to whom tradition had assigned them, and what had been attributed to one writer was frequently distributed among several. And the results were even more unsettling when the investigation passed from the Lower and Higher to Historical Criticism. The early narratives of Genesis were judged to be myth, the later to be legend, and even when real history was reached with Moses many of the details of the story were regarded as unhistorical. The same freedom of attitude was adopted with reference to the later

history and in particular the Gospel story. Here at the very citadel of our religion the critic pressed home his scrutiny for the vulnerable points.

It is perhaps even yet too early to ask what the permanent results are likely to be. In many departments investigation is still proceeding, and on several questions there is still a sharp divergence of opinion. But a tentative statement may perhaps be given as to some of the results which are likely to be ultimately established by the common consent of scholars. In the Lower Criticism we must resign ourselves to a large measure of uncertainty as to the text of the Old Testament unless ancient Hebrew manuscripts should be discovered. The Versions, especially the Septuagint, do much for us, but by no means all we want ; and where they fail us we are thrown back on conjectural emendation, which is usually a risky art. In the New Testament we have ample materials, but wide difference

of opinion still prevails touching the conclusions which ought to be drawn from them. In both cases there is general agreement that the text which has for many centuries been the Received Text of the Church is very far from being identical with the text as the authors wrote it. So far as the Higher Criticism goes, we may include among the points which are likely to secure general adhesion the following: The analysis of the Pentateuch into four main documents, each of which has itself had a history; the identification of the Book of the Law of Josiah with the kernel of Deuteronomy and its composition in the reign of Manasseh or Josiah; the origin of the Priestly sections, at least in their present form, after Ezekiel. Sources will similarly be recognised in other historical books. Several of the prophetical books will be acknowledged to be composite; some of them, notably Isaiah and Jeremiah, to be highly composite. Job, Proverbs and

Ecclesiastes, together with a large part of the Psalter, will be assigned to the post-exilic period, Daniel to the Maccabean era. In New Testament criticism we may expect to see the now generally-accepted Two-document theory hold its ground as the solution of the Synoptic problem—the theory, I mean, that the first and third Gospels are based on the Gospel of Mark and a collection of addresses and sayings of Jesus probably formed by the Apostle Matthew. Those of us who have always held to the Lucan authorship of the third Gospel and Acts are led to hope that Harnack's conversion to this opinion will be followed by that of German critics generally; but at present the signs are not very encouraging. As to the Pauline Epistles, I entertain little doubt that all will be recognised as authentic with the definite exception of the Pastorals and the possible exception of Ephesians. No agreement seems likely to be reached on James,

Jude, or on the Epistle to the Hebrews; and I wish I could feel more confident than I do that the authenticity of 1 Peter will secure ultimate recognition. Nor can I take a sanguine view as to a speedy settlement of the Johannine problem. At present the current sets very strongly against the traditional opinion. As one who keenly realises the difficulties of the fourth Gospel, but is desirous of seeing the apostolic authorship rehabilitated, it is with regret that I observe the very negative trend of recent criticism. Permanent results cannot be spoken of at present. I believe, however, that such results are nearer in the criticism of the Apocalypse. The positions with reference to this enigmatic book which seem to be likely to stand are its employment of earlier documentary sources, both Jewish and Christian, its dependence on very ancient apocalyptic tradition, its reflection of the contemporary historical conditions, the distinction between its author

and the author of the fourth Gospel.

So far as Historical Criticism is concerned, those who recognise its legitimacy as applied to Scripture will probably discover that the mere admission that the early chapters of Genesis cannot be regarded as historical is wholly inadequate. We must allow a method, whose validity we have once recognised, to put the whole literature through the most searching scrutiny. Of course, the scientific method must be strictly scientific; it must not smuggle in illegitimate postulates, nor permit metaphysic to masquerade as science, but it must set itself in the spirit of impartial inquiry to ascertain the actual course of events. It is well to remember that we may apply altogether inappropriate standards and treat an ancient writer as if he wrote history on the same principles which would be followed by a modern historian. Much of the difficulty which is felt by modern Western readers in accepting the historical criticism

of Scripture is due to the assumption that a Biblical historian must necessarily have made it a leading principle to give an actual record of facts. They were not writing for modern Western readers, however, and one can readily see from a mere reading of the text that their conception of the historian's task was very different from that which prevails in our own time. We need no little sympathetic imagination to put ourselves back at the appropriate standpoint for judging the Biblical historians from their contemporary point of view.

I pass on to the permanent results of criticism in our estimate of the Bible. It has in the first place given us a view of Scripture which corresponds more closely than the earlier theories with the actual phenomena of Scripture. Their tendency was to be at once too narrow and too wide; to concentrate the Divine revelation and inspiration in the written word, and at the same time to make claims for the individual

parts in isolation which were not really justified. Owing to the idea that Scripture contained everywhere the immediate word of God to the soul the theory of Scripture was unduly atomistic ; and since experience did not show that all parts of Scripture did convey a blessing, the inevitable result was that large portions were either not read at all or, if read, yielded profit only at a few points. Even the prophets, in whose writings the Old Testament reaches its climax, were read largely in fragments. One of the chief results of our modern study has been that we have learnt to appreciate Scripture as a whole and to recognise the permanent value of much which in itself could hardly be said to convey any direct spiritual or moral lesson. The supreme achievement of our modern study has been that it has forced upon us the fact that God has revealed Himself through history and experience. To bring out the full significance of this would require a long

discussion. I must indicate in the briefest way the positions which are implicit in it. It has shown us that the action of the Spirit is to be sought primarily in the history itself. The Bible contains the record of that Divine movement which, beginning in the dim antecedents of Israel's history, worked alike in the chosen people as a whole and pre-eminently in elect individuals till it achieved its climax in the Person, the teaching and the Work of Christ, and the interpretation given to these by the New Testament writers. From this standpoint we can give a meaning and permanent significance to much in the Bible which it was difficult to claim for it from the older point of view. There is much which, when detached from the whole, has little or no value, but which may be indispensable for the appreciation of the whole. Much in the Old Testament, several things in the New, have to be judged on this principle. It is only on this prin-

ciple that the permanent value of the Old Testament can be vindicated. No doubt, considerable sections would always hold their place for their inspiring eloquence, their lofty morality, their soaring spirituality, their fascinating romance. But it is not these qualities which would ensure them a place in the Canon of Scripture, in view of the fact that much of its teaching has been rendered obsolete by the Gospel. From this point of view we understand why it has pleased God that Scripture has included much which from the Christian standpoint is not simply obsolete but objectionable. It is because only so can the full import of the Spirit's action be rightly understood. The answer to many objections which have been supposed to discredit the Bible is to be found in a true understanding of what the Bible is. It is not primarily a manual either of theology or of ethics, but it is the record of God's gradual self-disclosure, of the Spirit's leaven-

ing of a material often too uncongenial. It was this too self-willed and too intractable medium which He had to subdue to His purpose, and the Old Testament records for us the wonderful story of His progressive mastery of His instrument. Only in fragmentary portions, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has told us, was it possible for God to speak to His ancient people; it was only in a Son who was the radiance of His glory and the clear-cut impress of His essential being that He could fully translate Himself into human speech and express Himself in a human experience.

And this leads us to the further result that we have come to recognise the glorious variety of Scripture. We do not find that the Biblical writers always express themselves in accordance with the same scheme of doctrine, not even in the New Testament, still less in the Old. We can frame no satisfactory theology by an indiscriminate

collection and arrangement of all the Biblical statements on each subject. The whole movement of revelation as an historical process must first be studied. Each writer must be placed in his context, and his theology as a whole so far as possible reproduced, and only when this has been done can the various types of theology be brought together and unified. Only in this way can we do justice to the rich and many-sided experience of the writers and the truths which have been conveyed through it. We can hardly over-emphasise the importance of the fact that while the Bible contains doctrines of the highest importance, it is primarily a book of experimental religion ; and that the truths it enshrines did not come simply as direct communications of theological propositions, but were realised through doubts and misgivings, through wrestlings of the soul with God, through long and perplexed groping, or through some sudden and radi-

ant flash of insight. And it is this human element which gives the Bible so much of its appeal to the human heart, and stamps it with such marks of authenticity. If we go expecting to find a body of doctrine formulated with scientific precision, or an accurate record of events such as a modern historian would give us, we may be disappointed. But we find something far better: we find life itself, the interaction of the Divine and the human in a great national history, and the experience of many an elect spirit. We may lose in abstract correctness, but we gain in warmth and interest. The teaching may not be so instantly available as if the Bible had been restricted to a series of theological and moral statements accurately expressed and duly co-ordinated into a system. But the difficulty in disengaging them from the history in which they are embedded is far more than balanced by the vital experimental quality conferred on them by the process through which

they have come. We can perhaps hardly speak of the Bible as modern criticism gives it us, for in the hands of different critics it becomes a different thing. And it is well to close such a paper as this with the reminder that whatever be the conclusions of criticism the fact of the Bible remains; and it may truly be called a colossal fact. But speaking for myself, I may truthfully say that my sense of the value of Scripture, my interest in it, my attachment to it, have been almost indefinitely enhanced by the new attitude and new mode of study which criticism has brought to us.

The Old Testament after Criticism [1]

4 I BEGIN by recalling the views held about the Old Testament before the critical era, views in which many of us were brought up. The Old Testament we were taught was a Divinely inspired literature, reaching, roughly speaking, from the time of Moses down to that of Malachi, when for a period revelation ceased. The Pentateuch was written by Moses, the Book of Job perhaps by Moses or even by an earlier writer, the Historical Books compiled by those who followed the great law-giver, the Psalter largely composed by David but including contributions by others down to the time of the Babylonian

[1] Deansgate Lecture, delivered at the Milton Hall, Manchester, October 31, 1911.

captivity, Proverbs for the most part from the pen of Solomon, the Prophetic Books written by the authors whose names they bore. No doubt attached either to the traditional authorship of the books or the statements they enshrined. We had a sound text; we could feel assured as we read our English Bible that it was a translation of a text which was definitely fixed and accurately transmitted. Outside the limits of our Old Testament Canon we recognised no book as inspired till we came down to the New Testament literature. If we thought about the Apocrypha, it was only to be thankful that we were not as other men and did not recognise its inspiration.

Meanwhile the best scholarship in Germany and to some extent in England was challenging all the ancient traditions and forcing the literature to give an account of itself. We heard some mutterings of the storm—controversies raged about Col-

enso, and Samuel Davidson, and Robertson Smith, and others, who were introducing into Britain the views of "German neologians." But for a long time the Churches were settled in their attachment to the older view. That is no longer possible. We have felt in Great Britain the full force of the critical movement which has wrought such marvels in the interpretation of the Biblical literature and the unravelling of its composition; and we have to ask first of all what are the critical results which nearly all competent Old Testament scholars regard as definitely established? Then we must inquire, How far do these results affect our estimate of the value of the Old Testament? Can we still recognise that through it God has revealed Himself to humanity? Can we still go back to it as our predecessors did, finding in it what we need for our own spiritual life, something that will instruct and elevate our thought about God and life and destiny?

In the first place let me sketch briefly the present critical position. Criticism may be divided into three classes: Lower, Higher and Historical. In this lecture I must pass over the last of these and deal very briefly with the first. This is the criticism which seeks to determine the exact text of the book with which it is concerned. Hence it is called Textual Criticism. Another name for it is Lower Criticism, given not because it is an inferior type of criticism, nor because it demands less intellectual power or technical skill, but because it deals with the primary part of the subject. Ideally, at any rate, we should fix the text of a document before we investigate such problems as authorship or structure or date. In the New Testament we have a vast number of manuscripts presenting very divergent readings. A few are selected for mention in the margin of the Revised Version. But in a great critical edition, such as

Tischendorf's eighth edition, an immense mass of variant readings will be found. The Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament give us essentially the same text throughout. We are tempted to imagine that we are on much firmer ground in the Old Testament than in the New. Confronted by the many thousands of variations in the New Testament text you ask, Where am I to find firm footing? How can I be sure that I am reading what the writer actually said? How much better is the case with the Old Testament, where there is little evidence of a different text from that which we actually possess! But this is quite a mistaken view. In the New Testament the multitude of various readings is so vast that the true text is generally likely to be preserved somewhere, and the abundance of the material provides critics with means for working back with considerable confidence to the original form. But in the Old Testament there

is only too much reason to suppose that in many instances the Hebrew does not preserve the true text at all. The uniformity presented by the manuscripts, so far from attesting the care with which the text had been handed down, is probably due to a deliberate suppression of the divergent readings and the formation of a standard text, so that the variant readings which would have been so valuable in helping us by comparison to work back to the original text have been almost entirely obliterated. It is fortunate that we have certain translations, notably that into Greek known as the Septuagint, which enable us to go behind the present Hebrew text to a certain extent, and occasionally to restore the original. Yet since this translation was itself made only shortly before the Christian era, there was abundant time for numerous corruptions to intrude into the text in the course of the many centuries, which, in some instances,

elapsed between the composition of the book and its translation. There is thus room for much uncertainty in determining what an author originally wrote. Yet there is no need to be disheartened. Though in detail the text is frequently uncertain, and it would be wrong to disguise how uncertain it often is, still we may say in the main that the text of the Old Testament is tolerably well preserved, and if we are content with not demanding too much, we can read it with very fair confidence that on the whole we are really in touch with what the authors actually wrote. Nevertheless, there are instances in which the text seems to have been preserved neither in the original nor in translation, and in such cases we must resort to conjectural emendation. Naturally, this is a process attended with risks and rarely leading to more than highly probable results, frequently to results to which a much lower degree of probability

must be assigned. It is a difficult art to practise with success. It demands adequate scholarship, palæographical experience, exegetical skill, literary tact; and even the presence of all these may be sterilized for lack of a certain happy gift of divination. Competent scholars will nevertheless be generally agreed that not a few conjectures have been proposed which carry conviction with them.

When we pass from the Lower to the Higher Criticism the results become more revolutionary. The Higher Criticism is so-called—it should not be necessary to explain—not because of any arrogant claim on the part of those who are engaged in it, nor because it demands for its exercise higher powers than the Lower Criticism. Nor is the distinction between the two that the Lower Criticism is that which supports traditional views while the Higher Criticism rejects them. The terms have nothing to do with views held or results

reached. They indicate different fields of research. The Lower Criticism, as I have already explained, is concerned with the restoration of the text to the form in which it left the author's hand; the Higher Criticism investigates problems of date and authorship; it inquires whether earlier sources have been embodied in the document, seeks to disengage them, and determine the question of their date and origin, and examine the way in which the compiler has treated them. Now, here there is room for conclusions of a revolutionary character. Such conclusions have been reached and have excited bitter resentment. Much which was once regarded as beyond dispute has now been surrendered by the great majority of scholars in deference to evidence which they feel to be conclusive. Naturally the older views are tenaciously maintained by others. I have familiarised myself for a good number of years with the more

important and some of the less important refutations of the critical views. In spite of this, my convictions as to the general conclusions established remain unchanged. What, then, are the results which are not likely to be unsettled by future research and debate ?

First of all, the idea of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has to be completely given up. We have to recognise in it four main documents, each of which has a history behind it. The two earliest of these may date from the eighth or ninth century B.C. These are the most interesting and fascinating parts of the Pentateuch ; they contain those stories which charmed us by their romance and beauty when we were children, and still cast their literary and spiritual spell upon us now that we have come to riper years. Next we have the document which forms the nucleus of the Book of Deuteronomy. This is generally assigned either to the

reign of Manasseh or that of Josiah, though it may be as early as the reign of Hezekiah ; and it is to be identified with the Book of the Law, discovered by Hilkiah in the Temple, which formed the basis of the Reformation inaugurated by Josiah. Finally, there is the great section commonly known as the Priestly Document. It embraces not a little of Genesis and Exodus, of Numbers and Joshua, together with Leviticus. It includes some narrative, but is for the most part occupied with the ecclesiastical constitution under which the Hebrews lived. After prolonged discussion this document has been assigned to a period later than the time of Ezekiel, on whose legislation in the last nine chapters it partially rests. Its approximate date is about 500 B.C. These four documents are continued in the Book of Joshua, hence critics often speak of the Hexateuch, meaning thereby the work in six books. I must return to speak of the Pentateuch

in more detail, but I will first complete my summary statement of results.

The other historical books contain a great deal of early historical matter, but they have been subjected to repeated revisions. While some of the elements they embody are written from a more antique point of view, the books are, in their present form, written sometimes from the standpoint of Deuteronomy, at other times from that of the completed Law. Parts of the prophetic literature have been subjected to far-reaching revision. In some cases we have the combination in a single book of prophecies composed in different ages and uttered by different men. The best known example of this is the Book of Isaiah. But the currency of the phrase "two Isaiahs" illustrates how vague and imperfect is the popular acquaintance with critical results. No one who has really understood what these results are ever talks about the two Isaiahs.

He knows that this represents too optimistic an opinion as to the unity of the book. The book is unquestionably highly composite; it contains writings by a large number of authors from different ages in Israel's history, from the time of Isaiah probably to the time of Alexander the Great. What is true of the Book of Isaiah is true of some of the other prophetic books, notably Jeremiah and Zechariah.

I pass on to the third section in the Hebrew Canon called "The Writings." For the most part these books are now relegated to the post-exilic period. Instead of attributing a large number of Psalms to David, critics would now regard very few in any case as having been written by him, and many would entirely deny that there are any Davidic Psalms at all. Several regard the Psalter as in the main a product of the period after the return from exile. Similarly, while some will not

deny that there is a certain Solomonic element in the Book of Proverbs, that book is now for the most part dated in the post-exilic period. Ecclesiastes is assigned to the late Persian or late Greek period. The Book of Job is placed in the sixth or fifth century; later still by some scholars. The Song of Songs is scarcely attributed by any scholar to Solomon himself; usually it is thought to be much later than his time. The Book of Daniel is dated in the early Maccabean period.

These are the main results of Higher Criticism. I have not shrunk from putting them before you in their naked form, nor tried to show you that they are not so revolutionary as they are commonly thought to be. These are the general results, but, as in every progressive science, room must be left for divergences of opinion on detail. But, speaking broadly, I should have with me in this statement

the great majority of critics who have deserted the traditional views.

From this summary statement of the results as they have emerged over the whole range of Old Testament literature, I return to speak more definitely about the results of the criticism achieved in the Pentateuch. Long before criticism had entered upon its modern development it had been recognised that there were several elements in the Pentateuch which could not be reconciled with full Mosaic authorship. It was supposed that at a later period the work of Moses had been subjected to slight revision, perhaps by Ezra. In this way it was possible to explain such indications of non-Mosaic or post-Mosaic origin as "The Canaanite was then in the land," or "the man Moses was very meek," or the reference to Abraham pursuing his foes as far as Dan, long before that town received this name, or Joseph's statement that he was stolen out

of the land of the Hebrews before the Hebrews were in possession of it. Thus we had presented to us what Bishop Ellicott called a "rectified traditional view." He affirmed substantially Mosaic authorship, but admitted later revision. But this position seems to be untenable. The evidence of non-Mosaic and post-Mosaic authorship goes deeper than the kind of evidence I have mentioned. The inconsistencies in narrative and legislation, together with the testimony of prophets and historians, forbid us to regard the Pentateuch as the work of one man or the product of a single age. Indeed, the assertion of Mosaic authorship involves serious difficulties for those who wish to believe in the inspiration of the work. Many scholars, from an apologetic point of view, have hailed the relief which has come to them through emancipation from the traditional view. There are features in the Pentateuch which conflict with the

supposition either that Moses gave some of the laws attributed to him or that God inspired him to do so. There are numerous inconsistencies in the legislative enactments. I take a single example, the disposal of the tithe enjoined in Deuteronomy as compared with the regulations in Numbers. In Deuteronomy we are told that the tithe of Israel is to be used by the farmer for a feast at the central sanctuary. He is to bring the tithe of his produce to the sanctuary, or, if it is too far for him to do this, he is to turn it into money to be spent there; but in either case he is to use his tithe for a feast before his God at the sanctuary, and to that feast he is to invite various dependent classes—the stranger, the Levite, the widow and the orphan: the Levite because he has no inheritance in Israel; the stranger because he is an alien, not a Hebrew citizen, and therefore exposed to civic and social disabilities and frequently persecuted; the

widow and the orphan because their bereaved and defenceless condition most appeals to pity and compassion. You will see, then, that the Levite partakes of the tithe upon the invitation of the farmer, in whose disposal it rests. That is to go on for two years. In the third year the whole of the tithe is to be devoted to charity; the Levite is to participate in it, but only along with the stranger, the widow and the orphan. The reason is that the Levite obviously has a very precarious means of livelihood. When you turn to the Book of Numbers you read that the tithe of Israel, instead of being the property of the farmer and taken to the sanctuary, is to be paid over to the tribe of Levi. The tithe is to be given to the Levites as a legal right; it is not used for a feast, and is not the property of the farmer, as in Deuteronomy. It is the legal possession of the Levites, and out of it they pay a tithe to the priests. So far from the

position of the Levites being as it is in Deuteronomy, they have a handsome competence: forty-eight cities with surrounding pasture are assigned to them, and considerable share in the other dues of Israel. In particular the priestly members of the tribe are liberally provided for, since, while Deuteronomy recognises the whole tribe of Levi as priests, the Priestly Document restricts the priesthood to the decendants of Aaron.

This is only one specimen of a large number of differences I might mention. How are we to deal with them? The traditionalists say, "It is stated distinctly, 'The Lord spake unto Moses saying.' If we are to abide by what is written, it is quite certain that God gave to Moses the prescriptions we find in these various codes of law." But I beg of you to observe the serious difficulty for apologetics in which you are involved in that position. You have to say that within a brief period you

have God giving to Moses directly contradictory laws on the same subject, without any explanation or indication how they were to be harmonised. The Rabbis themselves found the situation thus created extremely difficult. What we regard from our point of view as legislation arising out of different ages and conditions they regarded as given to Moses and for ever binding, so that they combined the injunction of Deuteronomy with those of the Priestly Document, which certainly never was intended.

The position we have to take up is this. It is far easier, instead of supposing that Moses contradicted himself, or, what is a much more difficult position, that God contradicted Himself in the legislation He gave to Moses, to infer that this legislation was given in different ages to Israel in different conditions. We all know that it is not possible in a developing community to have stereotyped laws. New conditions

arise which have to be met by new legislation, or devices that will stretch the old legislation to cover new conditions not before contemplated. It has often been necessary to introduce on a very large scale what are known as legal fictions, whereby you are able to extend the old legislation to embrace new circumstances. Now, in what we call the Mosaic Law we have something of this kind: a formula such as "The Lord spake unto Moses saying," which legitimises the legislation, answering to what I have spoken of as a legal fiction. It may be said that this formula is a definite statement which we have no right to contradict. But we have a New Testament warrant for interpreting the language in a liberal way. How do New Testament writers interpret the formula, "And the Lord spake unto Moses"? They do not interpret it to mean that God spoke directly to Moses. Take up the speech of Stephen, or Paul's Epistle to the

Galatians, or the second chapter of Hebrews, or consider the argument of the Epistle to the Colossians. The writers interpret the words to mean that the Law was given by angels. If it was possible for the New Testament writers to interpret in so large a way, in the spirit rather than in the letter, the ancient formula "And the Lord spake," it cannot be a very serious or wrong thing for us to put a wider and more liberal interpretation on the words "unto Moses," and to say that Moses, as the creator of Hebrew legislation and social life, had embodied in a few great outstanding principles those thoughts and regulations which were to be applied to the history of Israel as time went on, so that later legislators were really only working out in detail what Moses had stated in principle. That I think helps to solve what is one great difficulty in the minds of those who approach the subject from the traditional point of view. It lifts the

burden of having by some desperate expedient to bring together statements not really harmonious. We can see the Divine way by which Israel has been led. As the new conditions arose, new legislation was formulated to meet them. We are not now compelled to face the difficulty of affirming that within a brief interval God gave what seems to be such inconsistent guidance to His people. That is one of the ways by which apologetics has been helped by the critical movement and interpretation of the Scriptures.

But there are certain objections to the critical view which may arise in the minds of some of those to whom I am speaking. They will say that no literature ever came into existence through processes such as those by which critics explain the origin of the Old Testament. But you have only to look at such a book as the Book of Chronicles and compare it with Samuel and Kings to see that the use of earlier

documents was the method followed by Old Testament historians themselves ; you have only to compare the Synoptic Gospels one with another to realise that along the same lines also the writers of our first and third Gospel used the Gospel of Mark. The process was carried still further by Tatian in the composition of his Diatessaron. You have only to go to the Arabic chroniclers to see how they compiled their history, now embodying a narrative from one source, now from another, now interweaving narratives taken from separate sources in exactly the same way in which critics affirm that many narratives in the Old Testament were compiled. The statement that books are not, and never were, written along the lines along which critics say the Old Testament books were put together is contradicted by the Old Testament itself, by the New Testament, and by other Semitic literature, and could have been put forward only by some one who

took the standard of modern literary composition as the standard that could alone have been followed by ancient historians. If we think ourselves out of the twentieth century after Christ into the conditions in which the Old Testament was written, if we think ourselves out of our Western habits, and look at things from the Eastern point of view, we shall realise that some of the objections are such as would not have occurred to people living in those ages and that environment.

Once more we have had numerous assertions that the conclusions of criticism have been completely undermined. We have had the veto of archæology put on our results; we have been told that much which critics have rejected as fictitious has been vindicated by the spade of the archæologists. Archæologists have done much for us, and no doubt will do a great deal more; and no responsible critic is

under any temptation to undervalue what they have really done or to leave out of account in his critical results what has really been brought to light. But as I have said elsewhere, it is very necessary, in reading the works of some archæologists, to draw a clear line of distinction between what archæologists have actually discovered and have definitely added as facts to our knowledge and what the writers imagine to be facts and their combined inferences from both. I am bound to say with reference to certain archæologists that the facts and the alleged facts and the inferences from the combination of the two are too often permitted to slide into each other. So far as I know, there is no position put forward by sober criticism with reference to the Old Testament which has been disproved by any discovery of archæology up to the present time. I say that in full view of the assertions which have been made with reference to the

fourteenth chapter of Genesis and other passages of that kind.

But it will be said, "Is it not true, after all, that, for those who believe in the Divinity of Christ, these things are settled by His definite statements with reference to the Old Testament?" Naturally a Christian desires to be very reverent in treating any argument of this kind. Those of us who confess Christ as our Saviour and Lord naturally cannot take any appeal to His authority except in the most serious and reverent way. But the very fact that we take it in that way is to us a weighty caution that we ought not to invoke the authority of Christ in any cause He would not Himself approve; and I am sure that we ought not to make Christianity answer for its life by any argument of that kind. If I tell you Homer said so and so in the fourth book of the Odyssey, am I to be regarded as tied down by that statement to the traditional view

that the Odyssey was written by a man known as Homer, when as a matter of fact I know that this is very uncertain? Every one would understand that I was only using this apparent ascription of authorship as a convenient form of literary reference. It would be more accurate, but more pedantic, if I spoke of the fourth book of the Odyssey which has come down to us as the work of Homer. It might be more accurate, but surely every one would feel that I was intruding my views on Homeric criticism in a very unnecessary fashion, and that to adopt the usual method of speaking about these things pledged me to no acceptance of the traditional view. And that covers a great deal of what Jesus said on this subject.

I hold also that we are not to regard our Lord as lifted in these matters above the knowledge of His time. He was like His brethren in all points except sin, and was tempted to the uttermost in every

point in which you and I are tempted. He necessarily had to enter into the inheritance of our lack of knowledge that He might become one of us, to be one with us to the ultimate fibre of our being, that He might know what human life was from the inside. He could not otherwise have been tempted in all points as we are, for some of our severest temptations would, in the nature of the case, be impossible to Omniscience. When Jesus referred to the Old Testament I do not imagine He meant to be taken by His followers as endorsing any view on questions of authorship. He was simply referring to these things from the standpoint of His own time. We are as little to press His language here as when He said, " If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out ? " Do we really insist that He believed the disciples of the Pharisees literally cast out devils ? It is what logicians call an *argumentum ad hominem.* It is a serious matter

to tell people who have been convinced by many independent but converging arguments as to the truth of the critical positions that they must either abandon these positions or regard themselves as outside the ranks of the followers of Jesus Christ, since loyalty to Him forbids them to accept these results. How if they choose the non-Christian alternative? Suppose a man says, I am quite sure from my investigations that the critics are right, and if I must abandon my belief in Christianity, greatly though I should regret to do it, yet truth is to me the dearest thing of all, and I must make even that sacrifice in loyalty to it. Those who are truly helping faith are not those who are staking on the authority of Christ something it will not bear, something indeed it was never intended to bear, but those who try to convince men that critical views, if they are in harmony with truth, cannot ultimately involve disloyalty to Christ.

If He is the Way and the Life, He is also the Incarnate Truth, and you find Him best when you are loyal to all sides of His nature, intellectual as well as moral and religious. And He will put His approval on that honest intention of disinterested search after truth, wherever it may lead you; for if carried out to the end it will at last lead you to His feet.

Passing over much I should like to say, I want to ask you briefly to look at the gains and the losses. Of course there is loss in the critical view. In the earlier days when you read the Old Testament you felt that you were in direct contact with the living authors who were familiar to you from the history. You read the Psalms of David or the words of Moses, and were sure they came to you as utterances of those personalities. You have lost that, and criticism has replaced these historical characters with a multitude of authors and editors and theologians, of

whom we do not even know the names. Much of the literature is brought down to the later period, greatly impoverishing the earlier ages, and you feel that the Bible has become to you a much stranger book than before. A sense of loss is inevitable. But think how much criticism has done for us on the other side. It does not matter through what instrument the message comes, so long as there is the true revelation of the living God. If any resent the crowd of nameless writers who fill the place formerly filled by great personalities, we can reply that in any case much in Israel's literature is anonymous, and that we have something to gain by recognising the far wider diffusion of the Spirit of God in ancient Israel. Thiersch once uttered a very striking saying, "If there were a great picture which tradition had affirmed to be painted by Raphael, and it was proved not to have been painted by Raphael but by some otherwise unknown

artist, the world would have not one great painting the less but one great painter the more." And the same is true with reference to the Old Testament. We have a far richer, far more widely diffused outpouring of the Spirit of revelation than the traditional view gave us. But in addition to that we have now a connected view of revelation which was previously missing. We understand the growth of the religion of Israel, because we can place its documents in their true chronological order. We can trace, as we could not trace before, God's gradual education of His ancient people till His final revelation was possible in the Person of His Son. We are now able to follow the movement from point to point. We can see how the Spirit of God struck into the life of the nation, how behind and beneath the literary documents we possess He was creating the soil in which they were to flower.

The old-fashioned idea of inspiration regarded the Spirit as simply enlightening the minds of those who were the authors of our Biblical literature. But from our newer point of view we look upon the Spirit's action as far wider and far deeper than that. It is the whole nation and the national history which are in the first instance the object of that Divine inspiration. When we look abroad at the history of the world, we may see that the Spirit of God is everywhere present as atmosphere; there is no place so savage and so unenlightened but there the light which lightens every man is seeking to do its congenial work. But what is present everywhere as atmosphere is present in the history of Israel as a rushing mighty wind. We feel the influence of the Spirit blowing in an exceptional and unique degree through the whole of Israel's history. We see a meaning in Israel's election which previously we had not realised, and we

understand that the revelation of God which is enshrined for us in the Old Testament is more firmly based, more deeply rooted in the whole life of the people than hitherto we had surmised. We understand how, out of that nation's history, which was under the direct leadership and guidance of God's Spirit, there arose gradually those institutions in which its religious instinct found its most congenial expression. We watch Israel slowly rising out of its early grossness and its crude conception of God. We observe how the Spirit worked like leaven in that uncongenial mass till it so moralised and spiritualised it that it was possible for a great philosopher to say that, so far as her religion was concerned, Israel among the surrounding peoples seemed like a sober man in the company of drunkards. We have no cause to apologise for the Old Testament. Set it by the religious literature of other nations and you will be struck by its purity, its emo-

tional quality, its elevated thought of God, and its combination of a lofty religion with an exalted morality.

When we reach this point of view we are the better prepared to estimate the work accomplished by the great outstanding figures in Israel's history. For these were elect spirits, men who had seen God face to face, who had felt on their lips the pressure of the glowing coal from the altar, or whose spirits had been moved as the hand of the Lord grasped them and threw them into a prophetic ecstasy, men whose inner eye had been unveiled that they might penetrate into the secrets of God. And through those chosen spirits there was disclosed a truer and higher revelation than had dawned on the people as a whole.

If you ask what of the Old Testament is left after the critics have done their best or their worst for it, I reply that it is all left. It is not the critics' intention

to cut out parts of the Old Testament and say this is done with or that is not inspired, that has no reference to to-day and this has. No, it all remains, only it remains under a different point of view. You see what the Old Testament was really designed to be. It is the record of God's own self-revelation to His ancient people ; a record which has much that is morally objectionable, spiritually lower than the level at which we stand. But it is all the more valuable to us on that account, because it shows us the Spirit of God leavening, as I have said, that uncongenial mass ; it shows us God gaining a progressive mastery over His instrument, as He entered more and more completely into the life of His people. We see Him subduing them to His will, checking them here, driving them onward there, now sending them to the sunshine of prosperity, now the drastic discipline of suffering, leading them by varied processes from that low

level, little better than savagery, at which they started till they attained the high level reached before the coming of Christ. And thus we see that the Old Testament maintains its value alongside of the New. When we look at the Old Testament as telling us something that is said more clearly and more powerfully in the New Testament, then it is difficult to maintain any independent value for the Old Testament alongside of the New, because when that which is perfect has come then that which is in part is naturally done away. But the modern view bids us see in the Old Testament not an obscure and mysterious version of the New, but the indispensable preparation for it; bids us discover in it the direct action of God, spread out indeed over a whole nation but working with exceptional intensity in chosen spirits. And it helps us to grasp the point of view from which we may approach the Gospel and really understand it.

We may say then that, while the acceptance of critical results must inevitably be accompanied with a sense of loss, yet when we have really taken our stand at the critical point of view we are in a position to understand the significance of the Old Testament, as from the traditional standpoint we could not apprehend it. The Old Testament which God has given to us is a very different revelation from what we should have devised for ourselves, and far more valuable, in virtue of the fact that it was mediated through national history and individual experience. It is stamped indeed with many imperfections ; it is not lacking in what is morally objectionable and spiritually debased. We should not neglect it because of these things, for their presence has its own valuable lessons, and they are corrected for us in God's supreme revelation in Christ. We are the better able to measure the gift God has given us in His Son when we set it by the

side of what is best and highest in the Old Testament. He who spoke in fragmentary language to the fathers through Israel's lawgivers, seers and psalmists, has spoken His final word, no longer in broken utterance through men who were the imperfect vehicles of His partial self-disclosure, but through the full-orbed manifestation He gave us in His Only-begotten Son.

The Record of Revelation [1]

"And the isles shall wait for his law."—Isa. xlii. 4.

5 It would be much better to translate this passage "And for his teaching the far lands do wait." You are all familiar with the prophecy from which this text is taken, the first of those four wonderful poems which have for their theme the Servant of the Lord, which explain the tragic past that lay behind him, and depict the splendid future that stretches before him. He had been called to a great destiny. He was a teacher entrusted with the task of revealing the true God to the heathen world, and of

[1] The official sermon preached for the Primitive Methodist Church on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1910.

bearing upon him the burden of the world's sin. Alike in its original meaning and in the application which Christians have given to it, this passage brings before us in a very prominent way our special subject. For that is the function which this Servant of God fulfilled in revealing to the world which sat in darkness the knowledge of the true God and of the true religion.

The author of this poem meant by the Servant the nation of Israel, that nation whose suffering and death constituted the great problem for the time in which he lived. Why was it that Israel, which worshipped the one true God, had been brought to an end by a heathen power, and now, with its city destroyed and its temple in ashes, was languishing in exile far from its native land, while still the heathen oppressor lived and reigned and prospered? Why had God so dealt with His people? With the meaning of the suffering in itself, as the author expounds it in the supreme

passage which closes the cycle of Servant poems, we are not now concerned; but we are concerned with his interpretation of the Servant's mission to reveal to the heathen world the knowledge of the true God. It is this mission which gives Israel its significance in the history of the world. Apart from it Israel has no meaning to us; it stands simply on a level with other nations. There were nations that surpassed it in many of those qualities which make a people great, in culture, in power, in artistic genius. But why is it that our hearts are touched always as we think of that tiny people, with no special claim on our regard apart from this one thing? It is because we realise that it was chosen by God to fulfil the greatest of all destinies, to be the channel along which God's self-revelation came to men, and in the fullness of time to give birth to Him in whom the supreme revelation of God was enshrined. That is the thought which comes out of

this passage, the great thought that Israel is able to give to the far lands and the distant countries that for which they are already waiting. Even as the prophet writes, there is stirring in their breasts a desire for some higher and better truth than they possess, for something that shall solve the riddle of the universe, that shall explain to them the secrets of destiny and clear up the strange puzzle of human life and conduct. To unravel all these things was beyond their wit and power; as Plato said, they were waiting for some more sure word of God than they had themselves been able to discover. And it was in Israel that this more sure word of God was to be found, and the meaning of Israel in universal history is just this and nothing more, that it was chosen of God to fulfil this greatest of all functions, to teach the world what the true religion was.

That, then, was the mission. And how

was the fulfilment achieved? It came along many lines. First of all it came along the line of a great national history. We are perplexed, perhaps, when we open our Bible and try to read it as if we had never read it before. We put the question to ourselves, what kind of a revelation we should have expected God to give. The answer would be, A revelation very unlike what we have. We should have expected something altogether different, a much shorter book, a book in which the great truths of the spiritual universe were brought together in compact and concise form, in which moral duties were clearly explained and enforced, in which light was given us on the various problems and perplexities that confront us. But we open the Old Testament and find ourselves in the midst of a long national history which seems quite irrelevant to the purpose of revelation. At first we do not understand why so much space is taken up with relating

what seems quite remote from a revelation of God's character and human duty. When we think more deeply about it we understand, as we never understood before, how true it is that God's ways are not as our ways, but higher and better. It was along this line, not that of conveying to us abstract propositions, not of giving us theological definitions, or of summing up for us in a few short and terse statements our duty to God and to our neighbour, that revelation primarily came. God struck with unexampled energy into the current of human life, entering into the experience of an elect people. The word became incarnate in a human history. Very slow and long was the process through which it gradually emerged from its rude rudimentary state till the full-orbed revelation came into view. We see how in this national history God worked with chosen instruments along definite channels. Sometimes revelation selected for its medium a

great act of redemption, as when God freed His people from Egypt, or when He brought Sennacherib's threatened destruction of Jerusalem to nought, and thus saved for the world Israel's religion ; or later, in the great struggles of the Maccabees, when, led by inspired heroes, the Jews hurled back the attempt to crush their faith into nothing, and once more preserved their religion for mankind. Or it may come in great acts of judgment, as when God rooted out the northern nation and sent it into irretrievable captivity, or when later He visited Judah with political death, and banished the Jews from their home that in Babylonia they might repent of their sins and learn of a higher truth they had as yet not known. Along these great national acts of God His primary revelation comes. It cannot be said too often or pondered too deeply that the greatest fact about the revelation God gives us in the Old Testament is that it is a process in

the history of mankind through the history of a chosen people. There most of all we see God at work, and the Bible is precious to us because it does not confine the revelation of God to the more abstract truths, but shows us God at work in history gradually revealing Himself and His purpose.

But revelation was not confined to this channel. It was disclosed in those sacred institutions, in which Israel learnt to draw near to its God and realized that its God drew near in response. Or it might be in some vision in which a man saw God face to face, as Isaiah saw Him, and in that vision beheld not only the face of God, but his own heart in the light which streamed from God's holiness, and understood with an altogether new intensity of meaning what it was to be a sinful man in the presence of a holy God. Or we may take the case of Ezekiel, and mark how in his vision he learnt of God's sovereignty and the way in which He bent all history

to the manifestation of His own glory and holiness. Or we may remind ourselves how it has slowly come to light in some great experience. Take, for example, the Book of Job. It can have been created in no other way except in the way I have indicated. There must have come to this author some experience similar to that through which he represents his hero as passing. He must have known what it was to doubt to the foundations the morality of God, the righteousness of His government; he must have felt his feet slipping and the ground quivering beneath him; he must have felt himself on the ruinous edge of utter unbelief. And then in some mystical vision of God, in which the scales fell from his eyes, he must have learnt that God was righteous, though he could not understand His action. If he could not fathom His designs or justify His methods, he was sure of God Himself, and knew that all must be well. And

similarly we can trace the way in which Hosea through the tragedy in his own home rose to the conception that God was love. So Jeremiah, from the intimate converse he held with God, learned to transform, in his doctrine of the New Covenant, the very conception of religion, and instead of proclaiming a merely national covenant, proclaimed a covenant in which each man might know God for himself. And all these channels through which the revelation of God flowed into Israel gradually led to a truer and worthier conception of God, of man's relation to Him and to his fellows. Thus towards the close of the pre-Christian history of that religion there was reached a coherent and lofty thought of God and an understanding of human privilege, duty and destiny such as had never before been achieved. These, then, were the ways along which the revelation came.

And what was the revelation when it

had thus been slowly built up? It was primarily a conception of God which stood far above what any other nation had been able to reach, so refined, so lofty, so spiritual, so ethical was the thought of God Israel had attained. They had laid hold of the great truth of His unity in contrast to the multitudinous gods of the heathen. They had learnt that Israel's God was supreme in nature and in history, and that all the nations were equally with themselves under His righteous government. They had learnt that God must be holy, in contrast to the unclean and lustful deities whom the heathen worshipped. And as God was in holiness and righteousness, so it was held man must seek to become. We can trace the origin of these elevated thoughts and the way in which they gradually penetrated the consciousness of Israel till they became a permanent possession with which to enrich the world.

And yet with all Israel achieved there

was much it failed to do. The Jews had learnt that Israel's God was supreme, and beside Him there was none else, but they had cancelled their monotheism by appropriating this God to themselves and looking on the heathen as outsiders, or as vastly inferior to themselves, with a far slighter claim on God. They monopolised their God, and in that way practically cancelled the doctrine of His supremacy and unity which they theoretically confessed. His spirituality was restricted by the material and local character of the cultus. Only in one place was it possible for men to offer sacrifices to God. The whole religion was stamped with a physical and material character. There was a physical priesthood which offered physical sacrifices in a physical sanctuary, and in that way the spirituality of the religion was lost in a ritualistic materialism. And so one might go on to speak of other ways in which the religion was narrowed. We ought firmly to insist

on its limitations, for only in the light of them do we understand the full worth and the supremacy of the religion Jesus was able to establish. If Jesus brought no fuller revelation of God than had been attained in Israel, then one-half of His work, and that a very important half, falls into the background and becomes almost unnecessary. But once we realise how much there was still to learn, we place in His true position the supreme Revealer of the Father to the world. It was necessary, therefore, in view of these limits, that the religion of Israel should expand into something higher and better than it was. National religion had to give place to a universal religion ; race and sect had to count for nothing. These barriers had to be broken down, and only when all men were embraced in the circle of that religion could it be said that the religion of humanity, the final revelation of God, had come. And so while Christ recognised

His continuity with the past, He rose sheer above it. He came as the supreme Revealer of God to men, who not only brought new truths and deeper truths, but achieved very much more. For just as it is important for us to remember that it is not the word which is uttered so much as the deed that is done, which constitutes revelation, so we have to remember that even in Christianity it is not the word that Jesus utters which is the greatest thing in the revelation; it is the Word that He is, the highest expression of the Father's nature and the Father's love, the incarnate Word brought down to our human measure and translated into our human tongue. But if His revelation was not exhausted in what He said, neither was it completed in what He was. The supreme deed He did, that was also the supreme revelation of God. It is a mistake to suppose that the chief element in revelation consists in the word which is uttered. It

is in the redemption achieved on the Cross and in its glorious sequel, that we find the ultimate unveiling of God, His final judgment on sin, the secret of perfection, the pathway to blessed immortality.

But what, then, is the Bible to us in the light of what I have said ? Let us suppose that the history of Israel had been enacted ; let us suppose that, as the climax of that history, Christ had come as God's final revelation, but that then there had reached us no written record of it, that it had not been enshrined in literature so as to be transmitted in a fixed form from age to age. What would have been the result ? We can easily imagine what the result would have been, for we have had the lesson of experience on this very point. We know what happens when the Bible is put aside, how the Christian religion becomes debased, how foreign elements enter into it, and there is no standard by which it can be judged. You are at the

mercy of tradition, which in every age becomes more corrupt; you are at the mercy of priestcraft and ecclesiasticism; you are at the mercy of all the evil tendencies and vicious habits of the human heart that are continually at work to tone down the principles of Christianity and make them more congenial to unregenerate human nature. You are at the mercy of legend and of myth-making, of fantastic imagination, of the theories of theologians which have gone adrift from the actual facts of history. And this would have been our position had not God provided that the revelation should be preserved, that for all time we should be able to read the records of God's grace and love, of the revelation to Israel and its consummation in Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the Bible to us, that it incorporates for us the record of God's redeeming love, that it brings to us in documents that can never grow old the history of the past,

which, though it tells the story of past ages, has yet within it an eternally significant truth. So God, understanding all the weaknesses and needs of His people, did not simply accomplish the act of redemption, did not simply train the nation and reveal Himself to it, but He has given to us a permanent record to which we can at any time go back, and in which we can trace all the history of His love and His grace. And we can do it for ourselves. The Bible has been given to us not as the theologian's, but as the people's book; not as a book simply for the expert and specialist, but as a book for the lowliest and humblest Christian. It is perfectly true that it would not be possible for the unlettered Christian to avail himself to anything like the same extent of the treasure stored in it were it not for the patient and untiring labour of the scholar. But even though it takes the expert to bring out the full meaning of Scripture, it is also true

that there is very much in it which lies on the surface accessible and easily to be understood even by the poorest and least educated. There is much we can read, whether it is in Psalm or history, in Gospel or Epistle, that fills our hearts with joy and our souls with light. And as we read, we feel that we are in immediate contact with God Himself, that these words have the magical gift to lift the soul into fellowship with God, where it is not possible for any power to intrude between the soul and Him. Here we are face to face with God, and as we read His Word, whatever may be the difficulties or perplexities that it creates, there is abundance in it upon which we can feed our souls, whereby we may know our duty and gain strength to do it.

But if we are so conscious of the blessing that comes to us from an open Bible, we ought to have the utmost sympathy with those who are seeking to extend its influ-

ence. The prophetic writer who is seeking to describe the mission of Israel, which was ultimately fulfilled in Christ, says that for the teaching of the Servant the far lands are waiting. Even in his own day his sympathetic spirit caught vibrations in that heathen world, which told him of the longing and aching hearts and the groping hands that were stretched out to reach for God, for some Rock of Ages to which they could cling. And he knew that Israel had the true religion, so he says that the Servant will not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment, or, as we might better paraphrase it, the true religion in the world. And for his teaching the far lands were even then already waiting. Centuries have passed away since he wrote, centuries stretching out into millenniums, and yet there are multitudes in heathen lands of whom the same thing might be said. Their hearts are groping after God, and the Christian world has turned too often

a deaf ear to their cry. And how are we to spread the light of that which is to us the greatest thing in life, the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ? We can only do it as we go out to these heathen peoples with intensified zeal and with doubled and trebled resources. And wherever the missionary goes, there comes to him the necessity sooner or later of giving to his converts the Word of God in their own tongue. Where would our missionary societies be, when confronted with this necessity, if it were not for the great society whose claims we bear in mind to-day? The British and Foreign Bible Society has a history of the most wonderful, of the most romantic, order. None of us can have any adequate idea of its great achievements, which have resulted in the translation of Scripture into four hundred and eighteen languages. And is not our imagination kindled as we think of all that it means? For what does it involve to

translate the Scriptures? We have ourselves in our native speech a glorious instrument for uttering human thought, rich and flexible, capable of expressing subtle and abstract ideas. And yet anyone whose business it is to render the Scriptures into our own English tongue, though it has a majesty and dignity worthy to clothe the Word of God, is aware how at best his task is beset with difficulty, and how unsatisfactory the result often is. But think of the missionary who goes to a people which possesses no literature, which does not know even the rudiments of writing, where the language is exposed to constant change, where the vocabulary is of the most limited character, where few abstract terms have been coined because there is scarcely any abstract thought, where words are the precipitate of a very limited experience. And think what it is for the missionary who goes there absolutely ignorant of the speech of the people

to whom he is to minister. He has first to learn the language and reduce the Gospel to the lowest terms, so that he may make it intelligible to the people. Then he has gradually to create a speech adequate to express its sublime and heavenly truths. And yet over and over again in the course of little more than a hundred years that which looks almost like a miracle has by the grace of God been achieved. To-day we have before us the splendid record of these missionaries' work in spreading so widely the Word of God and making it accessible to so many peoples in their own language. And it is the British and Foreign Bible Society which has made this possible; a society which both at home and abroad has done more than we can ever reckon to spread the light of God's glory. And it is not merely the helper of the missionary in his task. For through its agency the Scriptures have entered many a home where the foot of the mission-

ary has never been admitted; and there the Bible, left to do its own work without note or comment, has been the means in God's hands of awakening and satisfying the highest aspirations. There is no work done in England that lays on the Churches a greater claim than this work of the Bible Society. The supreme thing in life is religion, and the supreme thing in religion is the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. We can only fulfil our duty and discharge our obligations both to Christ and our fellow-men as we take up with far greater earnestness and intensity the task of spreading this knowledge to the uttermost parts of the world. There is nothing which helps us so much in that work as this Society, whose record is so honourable and whose work, great as it has been, would have been far greater had it only been supported in a more adequate degree. In this twentieth century, in the full blaze of our modern knowledge and with the

best results of scholarship and criticism before us, we still feel that we have in the Bible not only the best book in the world, but a book which stands by itself, with no other book to be placed by its side. And having this treasure, we should, as far as it lies in our power, help this great Society to carry it to the distant parts of the earth and to those far lands that are even now crying out for its teaching.

The Permanent Value of the Old Testament. I [1]

In my former lecture on the subject of "The Old Testament after Criticism," my main desire was to explain what had been the outcome of the process of learned investigation that had been devoted to the task of unravelling the strands of which the Old Testament is composed, dating the documents and setting them in their true order. But I had also the duty of indicating, in a very brief fashion, what were the results of this process of critical investigation upon the views which we hold of the Bible and the attitude we could take up to it, how far we could still consider that the Scriptures of the Old Testament

[1] Deansgate Lecture, delivered at the Milton Hall, Manchester, 1912.

maintained a right to a place in our Bible. But, inevitably, after I had spoken on the critical problems, the time which remained was too brief to deal in any satisfactory way with the latter of the two questions, and it is with this question that I am specially concerned to-night. It touches the permanent value of the Old Testament, and it is a topic which presses upon us very much at the present time. It is not altogether a new question. Those of you who are familiar with the history of the early Church will remember that there were those in the ranks of the primitive Christians who doubted whether the Old Testament maintained its place as a sacred book for Christians alongside the sayings of the Lord and the teaching of their own writers. They felt, and, of course, there was much which might plausibly be urged in favour of their contention, that the Old Testament had been superseded. Some of them took up a position of antagonism to it; they

affirmed that it had come from a power quite different from the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, from a hostile power or a limited deity, and that it represented a stage which Christians had for ever left behind.

Such, of course, was the view of Marcion, one of the most famous of the second century heretics. He started from the position that the God of the Jews was an inferior power, just and punctilious in His attitude towards men who were under His law, but without the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. This God had given the revelation which we find in the Old Testament; but the true revelation that we find in Jesus came from the highest realm of all. Now, we do not present the subject to ourselves in that light. We recognise, as a matter of course, that the dualistic theory which underlay what Marcion had to teach is altogether foreign to our modes of thought; it is obsolete

for us. We do not expect to see Gnosticism rising up again in the Christian Church. But you can see how even those who did not press to that extreme the Pauline doctrine of the difference between the condition of things under the Law and that which had been brought in under the Gospel, might, nevertheless, be easily tempted to ask how it came about that a sacred book was still maintained in authority in a Church which professed to have left this Law behind it as a stage for ever over and done with. To us, in the same way, the question appeals why it is that a stage of religion which we all recognise to be lower than that in which we ourselves live should maintain its footing in our sacred literature; why the Old Testament, the religious book of Judaism, should stand side by side with the religious book of Christianity. Now, for a long period, it was possible for people to get over the difficulty by one expedient or another

which has ceased to become possible for ourselves. They asserted that if you only rightly understood the Old Testament you would find the true Christian doctrine in it, and by the key of allegorical interpretation they unlocked what they felt to be the treasure-house of God. There they found Christian Theology in type, in symbol, and in prophecy; and if you only came, they would tell you, to the literature with the right method and approached it from the right point of view, you would be able to discover all the mysteries of Christianity comprised within the Old Testament. In fact, they went so far as to say that this, after all, was the Christians' book; it belonged to the Church, it did not belong to the Jews at all. You take, for example, such a work as the Epistle of Barnabas, in which you see how the problem pressed upon the Christians to defend the position that they gave to the Old Testament, while, at the same time, they set the Old Testa-

ment religion aside. Barnabas takes up one after another of the various ritual prescriptions of the Law, and he says the Jews did not understand its commands at all. He interprets the laws of clean and unclean foods to refer to certain virtues and vices. He thinks, also, that the Jews made a great mistake and went against the will of God when they built the Temple. When God told them to build a temple He did not mean them to do it literally, for He did not dwell in a temple made with hands ; it was only a spiritual temple that He intended. And so childish do the arguments of Barnabas appear to-day that we are tempted to see in them nothing but a string of fantastic puerilities. But when we understand the situation in which he was placed, we realise how the very logic of that situation drove him to extricate himself from the difficulty in this way. You find the same thing with reference to the allegorical inter-

pretation which prevailed in the later Fathers.

Now it is quite impossible for us to adopt any position of that kind. Allegorism has for us no place whatever in the interpretation of Scripture. Scripture is not, to quote the well-known saying, a nose of wax which can be twisted in any direction according to the fancy or caprice of the interpreter. You must come to it as a scientific inquirer, as one who does not wish to impose his own views upon the documents that he has to interpret, but, clearing his mind of all prepossessions, sets himself to understand the doctrine and the documents in their original and true sense; to think himself into the mind of the author; to feel as he felt; to look out upon the world as he looked out upon it; to understand the movement of history and the design of Providence as he understood it; that is the supreme triumph of the interpreter, not

to bring his own views to the Scripture, but to find out what the writers really meant in the situation in which they were placed.

Now, I have called attention to the difficulties in which the early Christians were placed, because, to a certain extent, they have their counterpart in attitudes with which we are more familiar to-day. We all know how the ordinary Bible reader goes to the Old Testament very much as he goes to the New Testament, with the idea that he will everywhere find the same kind of thing being told. It is said in the Old Testament in a more obscure way; in the New Testament it is said clearly. It is told in type or in dark prophecy in the Old Testament; the meaning is written large and plain when you come to the New. He proves his own Christian doctrines indiscriminately by texts chosen from the Old, or chosen from the New. If he wants, for example, to

discover the teaching of Scripture upon the doctrine of the Atonement, he will go just as readily to the book of Leviticus as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, or, in all probability, he will go to both, and to many other writers as well, and weld them into a composite amalgam and call that the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement. But now we have to break radically with that point of view. There must be no casting a backward glance to a position which scholarship has rendered completely untenable; we must take the Old Testament for what it is, and we must see whether we can vindicate for it its position alongside of the New.

I do not think that it is quite an easy task to do this. And yet I believe that, if we will only put ourselves at the right point of view, those of us who are the most surely convinced that Christianity is the absolute religion and the final revelation of God may, nevertheless, while

we do not find in the Old Testament the Christian scheme of teaching, and what is far more important, the perfect type of character and the supreme revelation in a Personality, accord to it a place not only of honour and of distinction, but a place of indispensable quality and of inalienable right to be regarded as an integral part of our Christian Scriptures.

We are familiar with the saying, "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." And it might seem, at first sight, as if those of us who recognised a lower stage of religion in the Old Testament than what we find in the New, were by the very force of that principle driven logically into the position of excluding the Old Testament from our sacred literature. But I hope to make good the thesis that the very fact that the Old Testament is imperfect is the very reason why we want to keep it in the Bible. I know that this will seem a paradox to

many minds when it is first uttered. But I will put it to you in this way. If it were true, as people often used to think, that the Old Testament said just the same things as the New, only it said them in a darker and more difficult form, then we might reasonably say: "Well, life is short; religion is a very grave matter; I may easily be misled by what is hard to interpret. Why should I trouble myself with a book which speaks in this dim and uncertain way, which needs exceptional penetration to discover the Christian meaning in it, when I can go to the New Testament and find the Christian revelation set out in clear and unambiguous language?" It would be hard indeed to vindicate for the Old Testament its permanent value and position alongside of the New if it only told us in a roundabout way what the New Testament tells us in a direct way; if it were just the New Testament, so to speak, written in hieroglyphics. It is not that.

The value of the Old Testament lies precisely in the fact that it is not the New Testament and it does not contain the New Testament doctrine.

But before I pass on to vindicate, so far as I can, this position, I want to touch upon certain types of value which some might feel ought to be prominent in any estimate that we form of the Old Testament. For example, it is not wonderful that in our own day a great deal of attention is called to the value of the Old Testament to the social reformer. A modern student, as he goes back to those burning words of the prophets, or as he reads certain regulations in the Hebrew Law, feels that he has, in them, expressed in language of great eloquence and power, principles which are dear to himself and which he longs to see applied to the conditions of our own country, to heal so many of its social and its economic wounds. Now, the Old Testament here has unquestionably a very great value; but

we must be careful that we see where the value really lies and under what limitations it suffers. I need hardly labour the point that you cannot take legislation which was designed for a people in a somewhat primitive condition of social development, legislation devised in the ancient world, in a country with the geographical conditions of Palestine and its economic development, and, without more ado, apply this to the conditions of England at the present time. The value of the Old Testament in that respect remains, if only we are willing not to press its language too much, but to work back, behind the expression of the principles, to the principles themselves, that so, when we have understood the principles, those eternal principles of right and justice and mercy which were expressed with such unparalleled power by the Hebrew prophets, we may, having warmed and thrilled our own soul and enlarged our ideals by their burning words, go forth with a new courage

and a clearer insight to apply those principles to the conditions of our own time. That, of course, will always make the Old Testament a book precious to the social reformer (and who of us that has felt on his heart the burden of our country's misery but longs with all his power that he, too, may share in such a movement?), and all the more valuable because the New Testament lays comparatively little stress or deals very little with problems of that kind; so that the Old Testament, so far as national and social life is concerned, is not left behind by the New Testament. Principles are expressed in the New Testament more universal and deeper and more inward than the principles which were expressed in the Old; but the applications to the social and economic conditions, to questions of politics, are not made in the New Testament in the same way in which they are made in the Old.

Or, again, we may feel that much of the

value of the Old Testament lies in its extraordinary literary power, and we do well to lay a great deal of stress upon that. Too often, under the pressure of our newer ways of looking at things, we are tempted to withdraw the expression from the range of what we call inspiration, because we are nervously afraid of anything that should seem to savour of verbal inspiration. But it is not of this that I am thinking. For us it would be impossible, I suppose, to go back to the old idea of dictated utterances. We do not look upon the prophet as one who was a passive instrument of the Holy Spirit. He was not a mere channel through which the Water of Life was poured. We know now, especially since we have understood how large a part experience plays in the creation of Scripture, that the inspiration of the prophet was a more complex thing than this; that it resulted from the interaction of the human and the Divine factors;

that, as a matter of fact, it was not the dictation by an external Spirit to a passive recipient who wrote down what came into his mind from that external source, without himself co-operating either in thought or expression with the process as it went on and found its ultimate expression in the written word. No, the inspiration was something which seized upon the man and, so to speak, heightened all his powers. But if it heightened the power of spiritual intuition and the firmness of spiritual grasp, along with that heightening of thought and emotion there went also the heightening of the power of expression. It was the whole man, so to speak, who was captured and subdued by this invasion of his personality, so that he was lifted to heights, not simply of thought and of insight to which, in his normal condition, he was a stranger, but he felt that his lips also had been touched by the glowing coal and that his tongue had been loosed to express in

grander and more glorious language the great thoughts which surged up in his mind. And so I would not withdraw the expression from the influence of inspiration. Much of the Old Testament belongs to the class of great literature, and we do it an injustice when we do not see, even in the very form in which it has come to us, some sign and token of its heavenly as well as its human origin. And therefore it is, and it is quite fit that it should be so, that the language of the Bible is touched with an elevation and with a majesty, with a splendour of diction and of epigrammatic power which lifts it into the range of the great literature of the world, makes it a universal book. And so we also will hold that the Bible is precious to us as great literature. Yes, but so also is Shakespeare; so also is Plato; so also is Dante. But we do not look on their writings on that account as sacred books. It is not in the literary quality that the permanent

value of the Bible really lies. It lies behind and beneath that in something deeper and more universal still.

And so one might go on pointing out this and that element in the Bible which remain a permanent possession of the human race, though it is not in them that the unique value of the Bible really lies. I suppose that many, if they were asked where they thought that it lay, would lay their stress upon the fact that in the Bible —in the Old Testament of which I am specially speaking as well as in the New —we have the only revelation given by God; the truth about theology, about the great doctrines of God and man, of sin and redemption and human destiny; that we go to it, in other words, in order to learn truth. But I hope that we shall get away, before we have finished, from the idea that the main value of the Bible consists in this: that it is the revelation of truth which we could not otherwise have

discovered. It is not in its theological quality that the Bible is most valuable and precious to us. Let us remember that there are other values besides this intellectual value of giving to us the truly accurate doctrines. There is such a thing as emotional value, and there is much which we read in the Old Testament to which we should do the gravest injustice were we to regard it as mainly given to us as the expression in scientifically precise language of some truth about God or about man. The emotional value—something which is indefinable, and that escapes us as we try to pin it down and exactly define it, but which we can all of us feel as we read the literature that is suffused with emotion—that is something which gives to the Bible much of its power over the hearts of men. You know how it is even with our own hymns. You bring an entirely wrong standard to some of these hymns if you coldly analyse them and

treat them as scientific statements of theological truth; and yet you would not be without them, because you feel that, although they could not be treated in this way and might even, indeed, become grotesque instead of inspiring were you to apply to them so inappropriate a standard, yet they have the faculty of stirring and moving your heart as the statement of an abstract doctrine cannot possibly do. You read the familiar hymn: "Oh worship the King all-glorious above!" and you find language used in that hymn which has its roots far back in mythology.

> Oh tell of His might,
> Oh sing of His grace,
> Whose robe is the light,
> Whose canopy space;
> His chariots of wrath
> The deep thunder clouds form,
> And dark is His path
> On the wings of the storm.

You take a hymn like that and you ask the systematic theologian who has no sense

of poetry, the man who is utterly prosaic, to interpret this verse for you, and if he is a man of an old-fashioned type, he will distil from it a consistent bit of theology, which will move you to ridicule as you read it, as something too childish for reasonable men to believe. And yet, when you sing these words in the great congregation, do you not feel that your hearts are stirred and uplifted and moved and swayed by them? The thrill that goes through you with the swing and beauty of the music and with the singing of the vast multitude is inspired also by the language which you are singing, saturated though it is with mythological ideas which go back to the very dawn of human thought. You feel that it is poetry that you are singing and not theology. It appeals to something within you other than your cold abstract reason. It stirs you, and you are not ashamed of the emotion since you feel that this has its legitimate appeal

as well as the appeal which is addressed to your reason. And it helps us to appraise the Old Testament more surely and justly when we go to it and we find language which we may not be able to work into our schemes of theology, which does not lend itself to the scientific statement of doctrine, but speaks to something within our hearts which is deeper than all our reason, and touches us at the elemental bases of our being, and we feel, as we read such words, stimulated and uplifted and filled with an emotion which is among the most precious things that great literature can bring to us.

And we want in our conception of the Old Testament to leave ample room not simply for its teaching upon doctrine or its revelation of spiritual mysteries, but for this element of emotional value, which does not suffer itself to be defined in a precise way, but is an atmosphere that we must drink in, and feel, as we drink it, that

it fills and irradiates our souls. But I would not say, even apart from this, that the great value of the Old Testament consists in its statements upon theological subjects. It has an abundance of theological material which we could not do without; but it is not there, I think, that the main stress ought to be laid. I will illustrate this by passing for a moment or two to the case of the New Testament, because for ourselves it comes out more clearly in the New than it does in the Old. We are sometimes told that Christianity, after all, did not bring anything new into the world; at any rate, anything that was both new and true; because, it is said, you could parallel everything that Jesus said from other sources. Now, I do not want to discuss in this lecture the question whether that is true. I think it is over-stated, and I believe that the parallels which are put forward—and I have read a good many—are not parallels that will

always bear a close and critical examination.

But I am not concerned to argue the matter on that ground, because the very putting of the question in this form shows that the real Christian position has not been properly grasped at all. Nor yet do I want to lay stress on the consideration, that it is one thing to quote isolated parallels raked in from all quarters of the globe, and that it is quite another thing to parallel a whole system in itself by a similar collection of sayings uttered by one man. It is impossible, I believe, to bring together within the same compass a collection of sayings which will match in their quality, their first-rate religious and moral quality, the sayings of Jesus. That, again, I do not wish to press; I do not wish to put the issue there at all. No Christian could admit, without being untrue to his own faith, that the supreme thing in the New Testament is the theology, not even the

theology or the teaching of Jesus Himself. He could not do it, I say, without being untrue to the deepest element in Christianity. For the deepest thing is not by any means what Jesus said. As I have put it elsewhere : it was not the word that Jesus uttered, but the Word that Jesus was, which is the vital thing. The great contribution which Jesus made to religion was not what He said, not even His doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, interpreted as He would have interpreted it ; the great contribution that Jesus made to religion was Jesus Himself : His character, His life, His activity, His personality ; and we measure His quality by the impact of that personality upon those who knew Him and upon human history. It is there that we find His true significance.

Now I do not want to say this about Jesus and not go on to say the same about the Old Testament. The same thing in its measure holds true there ; that it was

not the message which the Old Testament writers uttered, but it was something which lay deeper than their message, and lay behind it; it was the experience through which they passed; it was the sense of God and their fellowship with Him; the personal religion of the men themselves, the character which they revealed; it was these things which were really more important than the principles which they uttered. If you will look, for example, at the case of our Lord once more, what you feel is that, even as revelation, what He was was greater than anything that He could say. He was limited, to begin with, by our human terminology; He was limited also by the capacity of those to whom He was speaking; and it was not possible for Him to put all His meaning and all His thought of God and of man into any words that He might speak, great and incomparable though these words might be. But what it was not possible

to do in speech, it was possible to do in personality, in life, in character, in action. You might say, indeed, when people distinguish between revelation and redemption, between the Person and the Work; you might say, and it would be the simple unvarnished truth to say it, that the supreme revelation which Jesus gave was given in His redeeming act, not in anything which He said, because there was no language which could utter it; but in something which He achieved, in the character He exhibited, in the life He lived before men, in the death He died in fidelity to His mission, and in men's behalf and for their salvation.

And so also in the Old Testament. We have a religious experience, first of all national and then individual—a religious experience which was greater than any verbal expression of it could be, great though we must admit that expression is.

You take the greatest of the prophets, for example, Jeremiah, and anyone who has steeped himself in the records of that wonderful prophet's career must feel that greater than anything he said—although I do not forget that he was the prophet of the New Covenant—was the personality of the man himself and the type of religion and fellowship with God which he was the first to discover, and in which he has found so many followers. And this brings me to the question, Where does the supreme religious value of the Old Testament reside ? What seems to me often to have been the great mistake in the older attitude towards the Bible, and towards the Old Testament in particular, was that it was too atomistic ; instead of seeing that the real value of the Bible lay in the Bible as a whole, men held it to reside equally in any bit of the Bible when you took it out and isolated it from the rest. Wherever you opened the Bible there you had the word of God,

which by a not too illegitimate process of interpretation, might be made to convey a message to your own soul. That was the prevalent idea. The difficulty might be put in our old proverb; it made it impossible for people to see the wood for the trees. They did not realise that after all it was the conception of the Bible as a whole which was the vital thing; that it was there that you could most safely rest your case for its Divine quality, its permanent value; and, hence you constantly had snippets of the Bible treated in isolation from the rest as though they contained to the full all the religious value and Divine quality which ought to have been claimed only for the Scripture as a whole.

Now it is with this atomistic way of looking at Scripture that we must radically break. More, we must recognise that when we are talking about the Bible as revelation; or when we are talking about the Old

Testament alone as revelation; that it is the Old Testament as a whole, or the Bible as a whole. Now, you will not misunderstand me to mean that there are not multitudes of passages both short and long which you could take out of the Old Testament that have their self-evidencing Divine quality within them to any man with the spiritual insight to detect it and the spiritual faculty to hear the voice of God when He is really speaking. Some of the most precious of things for all of us in our religious life are just some of those passages in the Old Testament. But you will see that the stress laid on those passages leads you into a difficult situation when you want to defend the Bible as a whole; because at once you are brought to this position: that there are passages which move you in this way—yes, but there are passages which do not. There is much that seems to be quite irrelevant in the Bible. Looking upon it from this point of

view you do not understand why it is there. You take unpromising material, let us say, like the account of the partition of the land of Canaan in the Book of Joshua, or the genealogies in the First Book of Chronicles, and you feel that, after all, these things do not speak to your soul in this way. No one would choose the first chapters of the Book of Chronicles for devotional reading except at the dictates of a theory he might hold, that though he did not know how it was done, yet God had so appointed it that the reading of any portion of Scripture would bring its blessing to him whether he realised any spiritual significance in it or not. I can quite understand people taking up that attitude and defending that point of view; but surely for ourselves that is too childish a position to be possible. We do not believe that there is any devotional value to be found naturally and spontaneously in literature of that kind. In all this our

difficulty lies here, that when we lay the stress upon the purple passages we incline, if we are logical, to rule out drab passages as irrelevant, and say that these things after all should not be there. Now I wish to take a truly conservative position. The position I really want to defend is this, that all the Bible is valuable if we know how to approach it in the right way.

You may feel that the case is even worse than I have put it, because you find what is not only useless for religious purposes but what is positively misleading and harmful. You take, for example, the accounts of the wars of the Hebrews and the extermination of the Canaanites in the Book of Joshua, or the similar stories in the Book of Judges. When Ulfilas translated the Bible he left out the Books of Kings because he was afraid of the effect that these warlike books would have upon his too warlike Goths if he allowed them to get into their

hands. Or you take again such a book as that of Ecclesiastes, which gives you a radically false view of life. It is not true that all things are vanity. It is not true that God has a beautiful, harmonious plan of the world's order, and that He is deliberately withholding it from men so that man does not know how to see his way aright. It is not true that man is like the beasts, and that there is no hope for him in the next life. All these things from the Christian point of view are not only things left behind; they are a contradiction and negation of what is dearest to us in the Gospel, and indeed of much which we find in the Old Testament itself. But I want to find a theory which shall enable me to retain such a book as Ecclesiastes, and yet to recognise to the full that the book is what it is, and not to try to trim it into harmony with different views in the Old Testament, or different views in the New, but to allow it to stand for just what it is,

an expression of a despairing pessimism, an outlook upon human life which has become impossible for ourselves. For me the Old Testament would become greatly impoverished if such a book as Ecclesiastes were to be removed from it. At the same time I do not think for one moment that Ecclesiastes gives us a true outlook upon life.

How, then, are we to form such a theory of Scripture as shall bring us to the point of view of accepting the Old Testament as it stands for what it is, and what it really means to be? Not if we go to the Old Testament expecting that wherever we open it there we find the truth of God; we may find it, we may not. Nor yet expecting that we must necessarily find a true rule for human life. That we shall find often; at other times we do not find it, or we find wrong rules. If we are to approach the theme from a Christian point of view we must do so with the frankest

recognition of the imperfections of the Old Testament, and find in these a clue to our true theory. And when we do this, we at once begin to see daylight, if we are only prepared to open our eyes to it. We realise that the value of the Old Testament consists in this, that it is the record of an exceptional movement of the Divine Spirit upon a chosen and a guided people, taking them at a low level and gradually leading them to a higher and higher level until it became possible for them to receive the supreme revelation in God's Only Begotten Son. Now, when we see this, we do not any longer come to the Old Testament with illegitimate demands upon it; we do not ask that the Old Testament shall give us all that we find in the New; we ask that it shall show us the ordered progression which shall move on and up to that supreme revelation. And when we look at things in this way we realise that the Old Testament has become of the

greatest possible value to us. It shows us in the first place the history of this unique action of God upon that chosen people, and it shows us the process of slow education given by God to a people (no doubt gifted with exceptional religious genius, otherwise He presumably would not have chosen them), but a people which from the very circumstances of its origin and environment had to be taken at a stage little removed from heathenism. We watch the process of the Spirit's action as the leaven slowly leavens the whole lump; and we must, in order that we may understand it, know the history in which the Spirit was working in this exceptional fashion. If the revelation is a process which comes through a history, we can understand the revelation only as we know the history, and, in this we find the meaning for very much in the Old Testament that, in our first impatience, we might have been tempted to cast aside as irrelevant. There

is much in it that seems to have no special moral or spiritual lesson to communicate; we cannot distil from it any theological doctrine, or find any guidance for our own individual or social life. It appears to be far removed from any spiritual interest, to be touching questions of national life or individual adventure. Yes, but suppose it removed from the Old Testament; what would be our difficulty then? We should be face to face with some of the documents in which the Spirit was finding His most congenial and His loftiest expression, and be without the key to the history which would enable us to understand it. We should be like those who have just one half of a conversation related to them, or like we are when reading one of those biographies in which we have all the letters from one side but none of those to which they are the replies. We should miss what we have given to us in this historical sequence, the atmosphere, the background,

which are indispensable to us for understanding the revelation, and that is why these things are there. They are there not as a guide to human life or as a revelation of theological doctrine; they are there because the revelation that is to be found in the literature could not be rightly appreciated or understood without them.

And once you have got away from the atomistic method of approaching Scripture and do not come to it with the demand, which it was never intended to satisfy, that at every point it should be dealing with spiritual or with moral issues, when you have got to that point you see that these things are really indispensable. But not only is this the case, but even where you have the imperfect or the definitely false, there you have also the same fact to recognise. For it was necessary for us that we should see not only the light side, but also the dark. For us, Ecclesiastes is

precious from an historical point of view, because it shows to us possibilities in Judaism that we might not otherwise have anticipated. To many of us, indeed, it seems to be what would be the truest word upon human life for ourselves also, if it were not for the fact that we felt that our optimism was justified by Christ. And so the dark shadows are necessary for the complete picture as well as the brilliant points of light; and unless we have them all and can paint them all into the single picture we have not rightly understood the Old Testament as we should. And the question whether we have truly understood the Old Testament is not by any means to be answered by saying that we know it very well; that we have read it all and read it over and over again, and can give chapter and verse with the utmost fluency. No, that is not to understand the Old Testament or to appreciate its real significance. There are people who have the

Old Testament at their fingers' ends, but they have never had it inside their brains. At any rate, there are some who, if you ask them what the fourth verse of the fifth chapter of the Book of Amos says, might be able to tell you without any trouble whatever; yes, but if you ask them what contribution did Amos make to the development of the religion of Israel, what new thing did he say, they will be utterly confounded by such a question; it would never have occurred to them that such a question could be put because it was obvious to them that if you opened Amos you would find the Gospel there, just in the same way as if you opened Leviticus; that right from the beginning onward, the same truth was being taught and expressed, now in this form and now in that. Yet the question is really to be answered in this way that that man has truly understood the Old Testament who is able to retrace in his mind the whole development of the

religion of Israel; who can take it from its origin, and before whose mind it unrolls itself as a continuous panorama; who can watch the whole movement, the interaction of the political and the social environment on the whole; who can say what was the original deposit that was entrusted to that people and how, as they put it out to interest, it grew at this point and at that; how this man made a contribution to morality and that man a contribution to religion; and how the whole moved steadily forward as one great drama till it reached its final and its supreme culmination. That is the man who understands really the true significance of the Old Testament. Not the man who knows the letter of it and can quote it fluently and glibly; but the man who is able to put his finger on every point of the development, to indicate how an idea emerges for the first time, and how it is taken up and developed by those who come after; and in this way he sees

the whole history as a great connected movement, and seeing it in this form he has within himself the witness to its Divine origin.

Yes, but perhaps you will say that when all this is done, after all, we are still face to face with this : that those of us who are Christians believe that that stage has been superseded, and, of course, have ourselves the final truth. But let us ask ourselves, did Jesus Himself and the early Christian Church grow out of Judaism ? Would Christianity itself be explicable to us apart from the Old Testament ? How could we understand the language in which it is given to us, the terminology which had a long history behind it in Israel, the ideas with which they operated, the motives to which they appealed, and the connexion of all these with a national history unless we had the Old Testament to enable us to do it ? For us, however incomparable we may believe the New Testament, the Old Testa-

ment must for ever remain indispensable, an integral part of the Christian revelation containing much which did not need to be repeated in the New Testament, but even where it dealt with characteristic New Testament themes, giving to us the only key by which we are enabled to understand the revelation which came through Christ and the men whom He had trained. That, then, is the true significance of the Old Testament. I will not say that we must apply this repudiation of the atomistic method simply to the Old Testament. We must apply it to the whole Bible, and just as we say that much of the Old Testament is unintelligible apart from the history it enshrines, and that history and its record gain their value and significance because only through them is it possible to understand the spiritual ideals; so, I say, for Christians, we cannot understand the New Testament in isolation. We cannot cut it off from its historical root and treat it as

though it had come without antecedents or preparation. For us, the action of the Spirit of God is as real in the Old Testament as in the New, even if it is less intense. And Jesus Himself, who fed His own soul upon the Old Testament and used it as the Sword of the Spirit in His conflicts with evil, who appealed to its authority, and who found in it the means of fellowship with God and the nutriment of His own spiritual life, is, and must be, for all Christians the law as to their attitude to the Old Testament. On matters of literary criticism or of documentary analysis, which lay altogether outside the scope of His mission, we are not bound by the language that He used to the people of His own time; but in His attitude towards the Old Testament as a whole we Christians must copy Him, and never suppose because it has pleased God to give to us in His Son a revelation which surpasses all that has come through any other channel to the

sons of men, that, therefore, we can afford to despise or to leave behind the revelation apart from which His own would have been impossible.

The Permanent Value of the Old Testament. II

7 PROBABLY many Christians have been tempted to suppose that it would have been better for the Church if she had broken loose from the religion of Israel altogether and abandoned the Old Testament to the Synagogue. There were those in the second century who took that view, and it is not difficult to sympathise with some of the motives which impelled them to it. I believe, however, that the Church was Divinely guided in the resolve to keep the Old Testament as part of her sacred literature, though few would deny that she has not been wholly successful in escaping the perils involved in her choice. Yet it was not for a very long time that she became clearly aware, if indeed she has even yet

understood the significance of that action wherein she builded better than she knew. Too often the meaning of the Old Testament has been largely missed because its readers have insisted on the anachronism of carrying back the Gospel into the religion of Israel. The great significance of the earlier literature has been supposed to lie in the presentation of the Gospel in type, in symbol, and prophecy. This seems to me a hopeless line on which to defend the value of the Old Testament for ourselves to-day. For if the main drift of the earlier literature is that it said in an obscure and roundabout way what is expressed in the New Testament in a plain and direct way it seems to follow that the New Testament largely supersedes the Old. When that which is perfect is come that which is in part has been done away. What measure of truth underlies this description of the Old Testament I need not inquire, but in dwelling on the place of the Old Testament in the

religious life of to-day it is obvious that we must present it in some other light than to say that the Old Testament is simply the New Testament in hieroglyphics.

At the outset we ought frankly to recognise the limitations of the Old Testament, a duty imposed upon us not simply by fidelity to patent facts but by the example of our Lord. That the Old Testament represents a lower religious stage than the New Testament, that it is marred by outbursts of ferocity, of national and even personal hate, by vindictiveness, and intolerance, ought to be confessed without reserve. But in justice we ought to remember how much can be said on the other side, even with reference to those qualities where the literature is most vulnerable. Had we taken the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount to heart, the defects of the Old Testament would have caused us no trouble. That it does not stand upon the level of the Gospel ought to be a common-

place rather than a paradox. At its very best it is true it rises to the New Testament level, in Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant, in the description of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, in the Book of Jonah, in some of the Psalms such as the 51st and 73rd. But this wide range of diversity reminds us how difficult it is to speak of the Old Testament as a whole, to construct a formula for example which shall embrace the Book of Jonah at one end of the scale and the Book of Esther at the other. It would be foolish to seek in this large literature for a spiritual or ethical uniformity. Whatever theories people may hold, their practice clearly proclaims their conviction that it is not equally authoritative and helpful throughout. Now as we shall see this does not mean that the less directly helpful portions ought not to be there at all, it means that we must not misunderstand the purpose for which they are included. And it is specially necessary for us to re-

member this in view of the progress of modern knowledge. We must try to throw the emphasis in the right place and to put the Old Testament where the progress of physical science, literary criticism or historical research cannot nullify the claims that we make for it.

Why then do we believe that the Old Testament with all its limitations still remains precious to us who live in the clear sunlight of the Gospel? First of all because the New Testament itself would be largely unintelligible apart from the Old. It everywhere pre-supposes the Old Testament, builds upon the foundation it had laid, speaks to a people who had been trained by it. Jesus Himself stood in the succession of the Prophets. He summed up in Himself all the religious meaning of Israel as the revealer of God to the world. He transcended indeed the national limitations of His race and became the great Prophet of the world, but His work was

rooted in the Old Testament and would have been impossible without it. And how are we to understand the theology of Paul or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews without reference to that Old Testament literature in which their heart and intellect had been steeped? Further, we cannot forget that Christianity is itself the culmination of the religion of the Old Testament. It is true that the old argument from prophecy is largely obsolete, partly because the centre of gravity in apologetics has shifted from external credentials to intrinsic worth, and partly because the propounders of that argument could not see the wood for the trees. But in a larger sense the earlier revelation is a prophecy of Christ since it moves forward to Him so steadily as its goal. It further becomes a very important element in apologetics to trace the history of Hebrew religion and show how the trend of it pointed inevitably to the Gospel. Once

more there is much in the Old Testament that we do not find in the New. Just in virtue of the fact that the New Testament writers pre-suppose the Old, a great deal is omitted that must have been included had they been building from the foundations. Much in the Prophets for example, especially in their treatment of social questions, remains of permanent importance to ourselves, at any rate in the ideals and principles by which they were animated if not in the precise applications which they made to the conditions of their own time. Or again the New Testament has nothing corresponding to the Book of Psalms or the Book of Job. Moreover, we cannot forget our Lord's own attitude to the Old Testament. It was discriminating and free it is true, but it was also reverent and sympathetic. To it He turned for solace and spiritual refreshment and with it He repelled the temptations that assailed Him.

Perhaps the value of the Old Testament

will become clearer to us if I now turn to speak of its positive qualities. We cannot lay too much stress on the fact that revelation was a process in history, that it was everywhere in the closest contact with life. This helps us to avoid certain difficulties which are often experienced. I have already said that there is much in the Old Testament which does not minister directly to our spiritual needs and which may not be authoritative for our theology. But it is nevertheless rightly included in the Bible, for we were not intended to use Scripture simply as a collection of detached utterances, every one of which must have an immediate message of God to the soul. There is much in the Old Testament that would satisfy this test, there is much, however, which would not satisfy it. We need to gain a conception that shall find a place for those parts of Scripture which do not lend themselves to immediate edification. And we gain this when we remem-

ber that the vital thing is not to understand this or that section which speaks directly to us but to understand the Old Testament as a whole, as a great record of God's revealing and redeeming activity in Israel. Everywhere the Old Testament is in intimate touch with life. It is vivid and concrete in the highest degree. Hence the historical books, even where they deal with purely secular matters and convey no special message, are yet of great value for our conception of the whole. They supply the necessary atmosphere and background in which we see revelation at work. Even those parts of the Old Testament which seem to us most in conflict with the temper of the Gospel may have their right to a place in Scripture vindicated from this point of view. What, for example, are we to make of the Book of Ecclesiastes? Some would say it is in the Old Testament, therefore it cannot give us a false view of life, and an orthodox meaning would be

put into it by exegetical violence. Others would say its teaching is radically false, therefore it ought not to be in the Old Testament. I agree with neither. In spite of qualities that compel our admiration the book presents a view of existence fundamentally incompatible with Christianity. It is not true that life is vanity and striving after wind, that progress is a delusion, that man dies like the beasts, that the knowledge by which men might order their lives aright has been withheld by God, that existence is an evil which may be palliated but cannot be cured. And yet the Old Testament, from my point of view, would be distinctly impoverished by the omission of the book from the Canon. It sets before us possibilities in Judaism which we ought not to ignore and helps us to realise more intensely how great was the urgency that the Saviour should come. Take Christ from the world, and Ecclesiastes describes with clear-sighted despair

what for many of us existence would mean. This, it is true, is an extreme case, but it helps us to a more adequate sense of what the Old Testament is, the record of the spiritual history of the Hebrew people.

The Old Testament then is the precipitate of a great religious experience. It came through a people which combined in a unique degree a genius for religion with a passion for righteousness. It worshipped a God who counted all religion as vain which was not penetrated throughout with an enthusiasm for conduct. It fused religion and ethics, those elements so often disjoined, into an inseparable unity. It gave the sanction of religion to the loftiest morality in a way hitherto unknown. Not untruly has it been said that in matters of religion the Hebrews appear among the peoples of antiquity as a sober man among drunkards. And their religious development was guided and inspired by a series of teachers who stand alone in the history

of our race. We can watch the religion grow under the hands of its great leaders: the Titanic figure of Moses who created the nation and the religion; the rugged Elijah with his wrathful protest alike against the worship of the Tyrian Baal and the judicial murder of Naboth; Amos the prophet of a righteousness so inflexible that the nation must be sacrificed to its vindication; the broken-hearted Hosea who through the love that rose above contempt and injury learnt to understand the love that would not give Israel up; Isaiah with his thought of God's holiness and majesty, of the judgment that must come upon the sinful people, and of the righteous remnant under its Messianic King; Jeremiah, the greatest of them all, who by his doctrine of the New Covenant transformed the very conception of religion; Ezekiel with his doctrine of God's glory to which the whole course of history is made subservient; the Second Isaiah with his wonderful interpretation

of Israel as the Servant of Yahweh who proclaimed the true God to the world and suffered for the sin of the heathen; the author of the Book of Jonah with his matchless proclamation of God's all-embracing love; the thinker who wrestled with the dark problem of evil and uttered his thoughts in one of the great poems of the world; the Psalmists who took the teaching of the Prophets and enshrined it in their moving and inspiring lyrics. And as we thus learn to know the life-history of the religion the Old Testament becomes a new book to us. We do not restrict our reading to this or that favourite portion, we recognise that even more important is it to understand these as parts of a mightier whole. It is not a system of theology, an ordered and coherent statement of the lofty truths about God and man, but something far better than that. It is a great collection of the testimonies of experts on the deep things of God, and

it shows us revelation at work not in a restricted area but on a vast national scale.

And while the development is intensely human it is not exclusively such. There must have been features in Israel which led God to choose it as the fittest vehicle of His revelation. And yet Israel alone would have been unequal to the task. It thought of its own religion as resting on a Covenant between God and the nation. The action of the living God was realised throughout and with peculiar vividness by its great spiritual leaders. When we think of the theatre on which its history was enacted, when we remember the great critical events through which the people came to a deeper and deeper apprehension of God's nature and His ways, the impression is borne in upon us that here we have something for the creation of which mere flesh and blood even at its best is inadequate. Here the God who is never absent from history strikes into its stream with

an intenser energy. And thus even for us of the New Testament His Word lives on in the Old with a vitality and power that could belong to no mere human utterances. As we ponder these ancient writings we feel across all the gulf of centuries, amid conditions so utterly different, that quality within them which speaks to our inmost heart. Their unshrinking application of morality, not simply to individual but to social and to political affairs, their unwavering faith in the triumph of the Kingdom of God, the disinterested piety which sought God for Himself alone and conceived fellowship with Him to be man's highest good, rebuke our own opportunism, our despair, our selfish religionism. And how inexpressibly precious the great passages remain! The noble rhetoric in which they are written stirs and thrills us as no other literature can, and in seasons of great spiritual emotion and stress there are no words like the dear familiar words to

express with perfect adequacy the thoughts and feelings which lie too deep for any poor words of our own.

We cannot then eliminate the Old Testament from our religious life and feel that the New makes it superfluous for us. We ought not to love it less than our predecessors, though we should love it more wisely by frank recognition of its limitations and especially by laying stress upon its meaning as a whole. It will be a happier augury of the enrichment and deepening of the religious life in our Churches when it shall be the aim of our teachers to see that the meaning of this great religious movement which gave Israel all its significance for the world's history is clearly understood, at least in its main outline, by all who have any claim to a religious education.

The Teaching of Scripture as Determined by the Nature of Scripture.[1]

8 I HAVE had no experience in teaching Scripture to boys, so that I offer practical suggestions with great diffidence. But perhaps the most useful thing I can do is to indicate the lines along which the character of the Bible itself suggests that it may most profitably be studied and taught. Our emancipation from a mechanical view of inspiration, while alike inevitable and welcome, has created new perils of its own, just because it has often not been accompanied by a corresponding

[1] Reprinted from *Scripture Teaching in Secondary Schools: A Report of a Conference held at Oxford, April* 22–23, 1913. This paper was written for the Conference and included in the Report, but was not actually delivered.

change in the conception of what the Bible is. Formerly it was almost universally held by Christian people that from the first page to the last the Bible was written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Opinions might differ as to the degree and the range of the Spirit's action. But as a rule the human element was severely limited and generally, I believe, it would be no exaggeration to say that the Bible was everywhere held to have God for its author, the human writer being little if anything more than the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost. While this view was held, no differentiation between the various parts of Scripture was possible on the lines that some exhibited more and others less of the Divine influence. It was all God's word, therefore all must be looked on as important, nor could fallible man venture to discriminate between the utterances of Omniscience. Everything in the Bible must be of value just

because it was there. Moreover, it was truth wholly unmixed with error, truth conveyed, it might be, in type or symbol or dark oracle which the Gospel alone could illuminate; but it was all equally true, the same scheme of theology was everywhere presupposed. All Scripture, since it was inspired of God, was held to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Logically, then, one could not pick and choose. All was profitable, nothing could safely be neglected.

This view of Scripture is still no doubt widely prevalent, especially in theory. But it has been abandoned by many, and we may safely say that it is becoming less and less credible to an ever-increasing multitude. The facts are so clearly against it that only a preconceived theory could have made men blind so long. It is very evident to any unprejudiced student of the Bible that it is not throughout on

the same level, whether of historical accuracy, of moral insight, or theological correctness. A worthy thought of God imperatively prohibits us from referring many things in the Bible to Him as its author. The human element is far more prominent than was formerly recognised, and in many places it might seem to be difficult to detect the presence of the Divine element at all. Such then is the situation, and we need not suppose that it will be other than permanent. But it has its own risks, against which the only effective safeguard is a correct apprehension of what the Bible is. The practical inference, which will no doubt be drawn by multitudes, is that a scale of values must be constructed according to which some parts of Scripture will stand very high, others very low, while the rest is distributed over all the intermediate parts of our scale. For if it be granted that the Bible is, above all things, a communication of truth about

religion and morals, especially of such truth as attests its own Divine origin by the superhuman quality of its ideas, we must be impressed by its uneven response to the expectations with which we approach it. For while some parts of Scripture are obviously rich in ethical and theological teaching, others seem to be well-nigh destitute of any nutriment of this kind. They appear, indeed, so irrelevant to the purpose for which the Bible was given, that their right to a place in Scripture seems obviously to be challenged by their own unfitness for the purposes of a revelation. And though this is a matter of moment for all readers of the Bible, it is especially serious for the teacher in our schools. The problem is less serious in the New Testament, but in the Old it is otherwise. Even in the New Testament the more abstract portions, where on the view I am considering inspiration might seem to be at its high-water mark, are

least suitable for school teaching except perhaps in the highest forms. It will be granted, however, that the Synoptic Gospels are among the weightiest portions of the New Testament, and they are more suited for school study than its more abstruse and mystical books ; though they raise problems as perplexing and perhaps more perplexing than those parts of the literature which are superficially more difficult. And probably no serious difficulty will be felt about admitting the Acts of the Apostles to a place in the curriculum, though it contains narrative rather than theology.

But the case seems to be far more serious when we turn to the Old Testament. The books most suitable for boys to study are those which this view of the Bible would place low in its scale, even if it is thought desirable that they should be in the Bible at all. The narrative books are much more congenial than the didactic.

Is it then the case that the books which are easy enough and interesting enough to find a place in the school curriculum are not entitled to it by their intrinsic merit? Is the story, often secular in its character and low in its moral ideals, a worthy instrument for that training in religion and morality which we desire our pupils to receive? It is my contention that such questions could never arise if we had really grasped what the Bible actually is. We need, I would say, to form a correct idea of its essential character before we can rightly appreciate the presence within it of elements which may strike us as strange. I desire to put forward a view of Scripture which shall make it appear valuable throughout, and especially to vindicate the indispensable character of just those portions which an impatient misunderstanding of its nature would condemn as superfluous.

The fundamental mistake in the view of

the Bible to which I have alluded consists in this, that it takes Scripture primarily to contain a revelation of doctrines and rules. It is no doubt true that in the Bible we find a rich store of theology and of ethical precepts and truths. But while it is inevitable that this should be the case, the real significance of Scripture lies in something much deeper. The view which I am criticising assumes that revelation consists mainly in truths which can be expressed in words. But the mere consideration of the place held by our Lord in revelation is sufficient to demonstrate the inadequacy of such a view. No Christian who understood his own religion could admit that the teaching of Jesus was His most important contribution to religion. No words could be adequate to express what He brought into the world. Even the most complete description of His personality, the most accurate views about Him, the fullest record of His teach-

ing, not only do not exhaust the personality, they do not even give the most important thing about it. For the most important thing is just the personality itself, as it moves among men and acts upon history, as it unfolds its character in contact with others, often all the more fully and impressively because this self-revelation is so largely unconscious. And so, incomparable though we may feel the teaching of Jesus to be, it is but the most obvious truism to say that He Himself was far more than all His teaching could enshrine. Not the Word He uttered but the Word He was, not the teaching He gave but the character He disclosed, the mighty achievement He wrought, was the pith of the revelation with which He illumined the world. It is not uncommon to distinguish between His function as Revealer and His function as Redeemer, but in the light of what has been said such a distinction becomes largely irrelevant. It was in the Redemp-

tion that His supreme Revelation was conveyed. It is this consideration which enables us to see why the Gospels and in particular the Synoptic Gospels must always retain for Christians a place in the front rank of our Biblical books. They bring us most closely to the actual historical Person as He lived on earth. We are in those writings in contact with the Jesus of history so far as that is now possible to us. And the knowledge of Him, which we thus derive, is all-important for religion. It is so, first, because Jesus Himself is the highest revelation of God's essential character, He is God translated out of the speech of eternity into the speech of time; secondly, because He represents the human ideal; and thirdly, because the knowledge of the Jesus of history is the necessary corrective to subjectivity in our apprehension of the Christ of faith.

But now we are in a position to inquire why the historical sections of Scripture

are an integral element in it which could have been omitted from the Bible only at a ruinous loss. We have seen from our brief consideration that the significance of the Synoptic Gospels is that they bring us into direct relation with God's supreme revelation, which is a revelation given not primarily in statements of truth but in personality and historical fact and deed. And it is in the light of this principle that we may go back to the revelation in the Old Testament. Here also revelation comes through history and personality, and that not simply in what might be regarded as definitely religious history. The sphere of the Spirit's exceptional operation is first of all the whole nation. Not that this could have been marked at the outset by any human observer. Even Israel itself was but dimly conscious of its mission. But gently the wedge was insinuated between Israel and the nations, which was to make so wide a separation

between them. And it was across the whole area of the national life that the Spirit was brooding with His quickening energy. Deep in the secular realm He was laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God. We can watch how His action grew at once more specialised and more intense, how the spiritual became more and more clearly disengaged. But right through the development from Semitic Paganism to the early religion of Yahweh, on through the prophetic and into the legal and apocalyptic period our sharp distinction of secular and religious was not attained. All along, the religion was intimately connected with the political and social life of the nation. This statement needs neither proof nor illustration, it is written large all over the history of the religion. It will be clear then that revelation lies far behind the creation of the Old Testament literature. We could even have conceived that the revelation might

have been given, and no written record have been left of it, though I need not labour the point that a religion entrusted to oral transmission would quickly have become so deeply corrupt as to be barely recognisable. But I state my point in the paradoxical form, that the revelation in Israel is conceivable without the Old Testament, in order to drive home the thought that the written record is largely secondary and not primary. The Old Testament is the precipitate of that unique and intense action of the Holy Spirit on His chosen medium of revelation. It is accordingly not possible for us to leave the historical books out of account as if they were irrelevant to the purpose of a revelation. If we are to reach the revelation itself this part of the literature is essential for our purpose. For the history itself is primarily the sphere of God's self-manifestation. That is the stage on which He is in the first instance at work. Just

as in the climax, so also in that which led up to it, God unfolds His character and His purpose in life and action rather than in abstract doctrine. History is His chosen mode of self-expression. We learn to understand Him as we watch His moulding of events, His great acts of retribution or deliverance, the slow but steady movement towards a predestined goal. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt, its discipline in the wilderness, its transition to the settled life of Canaan, and exposure to the fascinating perils of the cult of the Baalim, its emergence from the rude chaos of the period after the conquest into the more ordered government under the kings, were all reverently recognised by the Biblical writers as incidents in a Divinely guided process. And so one might pass on through the various stages of the history, and in the words of the Hebrew poet "rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord." Since, then, the events themselves

are part of God's self-revelation, the books which might be dismissed as concerned merely with external events of a secular kind become for us a necessary element of Scripture. But we need to go beyond the term self-revelation. The Hebrew did not simply feel that through history he learnt about God. He realised that in history he was in contact with God Himself, that in Israel's reverses or triumphs and also in the everyday life of the people God was present in all His living energy. And we are thus in secondary contact with God in the record of the revelation.

But, it may be urged, does not this lead us to the paradox that we thus accord the primacy to those portions of Scripture which our modern study of the Bible has tended to push into the background? Are we seriously to suppose that we are as much in contact with God in Judges or Samuel or Kings as we are in the great Prophets or Psalmists? It is not my

intention to suggest this. But I would point out first of all that the historical literature is indispensable if we are to understand the prophets, for it supplies us with the background and the atmosphere needed to make them intelligible. Even if, considered in themselves, they had no Divine quality in them, yet their function in the whole organism of Scripture could not rightly be challenged. They supply the setting in which Prophet and Psalmist must be placed. But on the other hand I am not depreciating the literature of poetry, of wisdom and of prophecy; for these also are events and not merely words. Just as behind the narrative there lies the action, so behind these other forms of literature there lie the personality and its experience. And this personality was Divinely selected and trained to be the vehicle of revelation, the environment was chosen, the experience was planned. In the tragic history of Hosea, through which

there slowly dawned upon him a wholly new sense of Yahweh's love for Israel, the broken-hearted prophet discerned an expression of Yahweh's will. Similarly the Christianity before Christ which we find in Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant was the outcome of those bitter years of agony in which, forsaken and scorned by men, he sought a refuge in God and slowly came to realise that in personal fellowship with Him the essence of religion consisted. But here again the prophet is conscious that it is God who has taken the initiative with him and forced the task on His reluctant servant, so that though he chafes against it, his struggles are in vain against the compulsion of God's resolute will. If, once more, the whole teaching of Isaiah, his proclamation of God's holiness and majesty, his impassioned denunciation of Israel's sin, his conviction of a ruthless judgment which would leave the land desolate and denuded of its inhabitants,

his sane outlook on international politics, his serene assurance of Zion's escape when its captivity seemed inevitable, all go back directly or indirectly to the vision in which he received his call, that vision was no self-induced ecstasy but the real self-manifestation of God in an overwhelming psychical experience. So too Ezekiel's sense of the glory and the sovereignty of God, from which we may deduce practically the whole of his teaching, was borne in upon him in a vision similar to that of Isaiah. The actual mechanism of prophecy we can at the best, it is true, only dimly discern, and in other cases only uncertainly divine, but the force which drives it, the illumination which it sends forth, have no meaner source than God Himself, as with an energy unparalleled among other peoples He strikes into the current of national life and history.

What, then, in the light of these considerations is the result at which the teaching

in our schools ought to aim? It is to secure that at least the foundation shall be laid for a comprehensive view of that great historical process in which God was present as a living energy, communicating, not simply theological truth, but Himself with growing clearness and fullness till the time was ripe for that supreme deed of grace in which at once the whole depth of His nature was disclosed and His redemptive energy received its loftiest, its most penetrating, its most universal expression. In many cases it is only the foundation which can be laid in knowledge of the historical facts. But in our Secondary Schools it ought not to be impossible to do something more. I hope, however, that what I have said may do something to relieve uneasy consciences of the feeling that the religious teaching they are called upon to give has in many cases only a remote connexion with religion. If what I have said is true, it is an integral part

of any sound Christian education, vital indeed to the true apprehension of religion. The teacher must be prepared to take long views, to feel that he need not reproach himself with having missed his opportunity, if his Scripture lesson has not been made to lead up directly to any moral or spiritual truth. The great lessons of religion and ethics are conveyed by a long cumulative process in which we think ourselves by sympathetic imagination into the historical process through which they were originally conveyed. Once more I repeat that the impression we should gain from our study is not simply, nor even primarily, that we are *learning about* God and His ways, but that we should feel ourselves to be in touch with God Himself, I mean with God in history, the chosen sphere of His self-manifestation. The history itself then must be known if any firm basis of sound religious instruction is to be secured. But one would regret to think that no step

further could be taken to the higher reaches of the subject, to that literature which has ceased to be mainly narrative and is, apparently at least, more abstract and didactic, such as some of the prophetical books. Here too we are really in contact with history and with great personalities, whose experience is largely the key to their teaching and the explanation of their work. The books are in many cases too difficult for much detailed study, but something might be done even here by judicious selection. What is mostly needed, however, at this stage, is a sketch of the development written by a scholar who not only has competent knowledge but the power of lucid, sympathetic, and fascinating exposition. Critical problems must necessarily be touched upon, but they should never be made unduly prominent. It is a mistake to give the impression that Biblical criticism is an end in itself. It is necessary simply because we cannot

write a history of the religion without analysing our sources and arranging them so far as may be in chronological order. The history should have been largely learned at first-hand from the Bible in the lower forms, but now an outline of it should be given as modern scholars have reconstructed it. But the emphasis should come on the history of the religion, and here pre-eminently on the significance of the great personalities and what they have contributed to spiritual and moral development. While the opinion prevailed that the Old Testament as a whole and in all its parts was really saying the same things as the New, that it was written from the same theological standpoint, and perhaps from the same moral level, and taught the same theological truths, it was no wonder if the Bible seemed to be a dull book. But now we realise that before us there lies the record of the greatest religious and ethical development in the history of

our race, and that the study of this mighty movement is among the most enthralling that history opens to us. It is indeed much more than this, it is also momentous for the quality and the wide or narrow diffusion of religion in the days before us. But it is not this aspect that should be uppermost in our presentation, though it may be deepest in our purpose and our thought. We must enlist the interest in stirring events, the hero-worship which is evoked by the loving and enthusiastic study of mighty personalities, the intellectual satisfaction which comes through tracing the history of a great movement and watching how it develops from point to point and from age to age and what contribution to the development was made by the chosen spirits appointed for the task. The present is unintelligible without the past. Our religion cannot permanently survive if divorced from history. The Gospel can be rightly understood only as

we apprehend its vital connexion with the religion of Israel. The schools cannot, it is true, do everything and the competition of other subjects prevents much from being given which is not in itself unsuitable for boys to receive. The necessity is all the greater for teaching the essential things, teaching them in the right way and in a form which will serve as a basis for future progress. We must, of course, recognise that many will concern themselves but little if at all with Scripture when school days are over. It is good for them to have got at least such knowledge as their teachers have been able to impart. But the subject ought to be and can be made so interesting that not a few may be willing to keep it up after school has been left.

But along with the basis for future study care should be taken to give the right point of view. Much of our difficulty and confusion with reference to the Bible is

due to the prevalence of incorrect and inadequate conceptions of what the Bible really is. To place in the possession of his pupils the true conception is among the greatest and most necessary things which the teacher of Scripture can do for those entrusted to his care.

The Verification of Revelation in Experience [1]

9 This title at once suggests a whole series of questions. Assuming that the Revelation given in Scripture is that intended, in what sense do we propose to make it the subject of verification? Is it the whole Bible as it stands or certain portions of it? Again is it the whole range of subjects on which Scripture has spoken or only a selection that is contemplated in our inquiry? Do we emphasise the unity of Scripture or do we recognise a large diversity within it? Do we confine our-

[1] Paper read at the Methodist Assembly held in Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London, on October 5, 1909. Some passages have been restored, which had to be omitted in reading for want of time, and some trifling alterations have been made to fit it for its new function.

selves to the Bible itself or do we include the affirmations which theology has made about it? What is it that we want to verify? Is it fact or idea, or both? Do we pursue our search in the field of psychology, or history, or metaphysics, or doctrinal theology? How far is experience competent to take us in our search? To whom is the verification given, to him who is immediately conscious of the experience or to others? Whose experience have we to take into account, the individual or the collective? our own merely or that of others? If the latter what limits are we to set to our search? Is there a standard type of experience, the common possession of all who call themselves Christians? or are there types of experience each of which may claim to be a legitimate though not a monopolist form of Christianity? And indeed have we the right to limit ourselves to Christianity? By far the larger though not the more precious portion of our Bible

is pre-Christian and ought therefore to admit of verification from those who remain at the Old Testament point of view.

I have enumerated these questions not because it is my intention to attempt the task of answering them in a time which would be wholly inadequate for the purpose but that some of the salient issues may be before us at the outset. I hope, however, to indicate my position with reference to some of the problems involved.

I begin with the literature which we propose to test. In a sacred book it is at first surprising to find so much that is secular, not a little that seems unfitted to be the vehicle either of religious or moral instruction. What are we to do with elements in the Bible apparently so intractable to spiritual handling as the genealogies in Chronicles, or the account of the division of Canaan in Joshua? If every part of Scripture, just because it is Scripture, must yield spiritual or ethical

edification, we shall be driven to allegorical interpretation. But that way of escape is closed against us. Scripture means what it says and it is not to be run into the moulds of this or that interpreter's caprice. We cannot escape by reading back the New Testament into the Old. By such an illegitimate anachronism we wrong both the Old Testament and the New; we deprive the former of its independent value and we depreciate the uniqueness of the Christian revelation. Are we then to strike out large sections of the Bible on the ground that in our sacred literature they have no right to be there? It is only an erroneous theory as to the real character of the Bible, which could lead us to answer such a question in the affirmative. We must rise from the mistaken view of Scripture which it implies, to a conception that shall enable us to rejoice in their inclusion. We must break with an atomistic view of the Bible, or we shall never

discern its full value. We have no right to insist that every part of it shall yield a direct spiritual message. Such a demand involves an illegitimate and violent exegesis. There is much which has no spiritual value when it is torn from the organism of which it forms part. A very large number of passages come home to the soul with immediate and self-authenticating power. And it is these passages which sustain the average reader's estimate of the Bible. He extends to the whole literature the impression that is made by these portions of it. But what of the other portions which do not satisfy this test? The ordinary Bible reader theoretically recognises the inspiration of these as of the other portions. But the practical treatment varies. Some read them in the belief, which is not free from superstition, that the reading of them is in itself bound to bring a blessing; while others who equally recognise their inspired character, will

neglect them for passages which are charged with religious and moral power. Both attitudes are unfortunate and they rest on what I have called an atomistic view of Scripture. It is only when we rise above this idea of the Bible and regard it as a great connected whole that these parts of Scripture which are either neglected or read without benefit will be appreciated at their proper worth. The lack of historical imagination is responsible both for the abuse of many parts of Scripture and for the failure to use them. Once we have grasped the principle that revelation has come as a process in history, Scripture is invested for us with a new significance.

To a large extent we may say that the Bible is occasional and incidental, concerned with immediate necessities and contemporary problems. Even when it narrates the history of earlier ages it does so with a mainly practical motive. The selection of incidents is deliberately made for its

bearing on the writer's own age. The interest of the scientific historian is almost entirely absent, the dominant interest is edification. And when we turn to the prophets, in many ways the most important part of the Old Testament, this interest in the contemporary situation becomes much more apparent. The consequence is that the prophetic literature has been very widely neglected and where not neglected it has been misunderstood. Its relevance to contemporary conditions prevents it from being immediately available for conditions altogether different. And yet there is no part of the Old Testament which we can so little afford to neglect. For while the message was limited by the circumstances of the hour the principles it embodied were of eternal validity. If then we are to win their full value from the prophetic utterances we must aim at two things. We must reach the eternal principle by divesting it of its temporary garb,

and we must observe how the prophets apply the principle to the situation with which they deal. But we can achieve our double purpose only through a precise apprehension of the actual conditions to which the eternal truth was so exquisitely adjusted. And it is from this point of view that much in the Bible, which on an atomistic conception appears to be superfluous or even out of place, becomes valuable. For it gives us indispensable assistance in reconstructing these conditions, it supplies us with atmosphere and background. It may have little independent value, but it was not included in Scripture for its own sake but for the sake of the whole organism of which it forms a necessary part. "The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee." We have not made the highest use of the Old Testament when we have nourished our souls on its loftiest and choicest passages. It is when we have apprehended it as a

great living organism in which each part has its place and function that we have rightly understood it. It is a whole which is more important than the greatest of its parts. Moreover on a true view of Scripture even the limitations and imperfections of the Old Testament have their significance. The Old Testament is not our final authority. Judaism is not for us on the level of Christianity. The contrast between the prayers of the Psalmists for vengeance on their persecutors and the prayer of Stephen for his murderers is a precious testimony to the revolution wrought by Christ.

It has been with no intention of deserting my theme that I have spoken at such length on the nature of Scripture. We must know what it is that we want to verify before we attempt the process of verification. Moreover, what I have already said forms an introduction to this section of the subject. That revelation is a

process in history prepares us to believe that it will find its verification in life. And especially I would emphasise that much in Scripture is the direct creation of experience. The Bible is pre-eminently a book of experimental religion. What experience has created we may expect experience to verify. But we must not overlook the inherent limitations of experience, even when interpreted in the largest way, as an instrument of verification. Experience cannot verify alleged historical events in a sacred book; they must be left to historical investigation. It cannot directly verify the authorship of books, that is the province of criticism. It is imperative to insist on this because it is constantly overlooked. Cowper's famous couplet on the poor cottager who

> "Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."

illustrates what I mean. Her conviction

that the Bible was true rested simply on her experience of redemption. But obviously the religious element in the Bible is all that religious experience can directly verify. The Bible, however, contains very much more than a religious element. In particular it includes much of a historical character which in the nature of the case experience cannot verify. Were Christianity simply a matter of inward experiences with such outward results as flow from them we might stake our position on the verification they supply. But the Gospel stands or falls by a series of facts in space and time, and by certain theological affirmations which it makes about these. And it is very difficult to argue on the strength of transactions within the soul for the truth of historical events or theological doctrines. The cures effected by Christian Scientists do not guarantee the metaphysics of Christian Science. It is unquestionable that through the gracious condescension of God

spiritual blessing has often come to devout souls where the explanation of the experience has been entirely false. The sense of union with Christ which comes to the pious Romanist in the Eucharist does not prove the Roman theory of the Mass. The Biblical doctrine of sin's universal dominion I find attested in experience, but experience can give no direct attestation to the events narrated in the third chapter of Genesis. The proclamation of redemption has found its echo in the experience of the redeemed, but that experience cannot vindicate the historicity of the facts on which the Church has always insisted that salvation depends. Accordingly as one who is deeply concerned for the acceptance of the great Christian truths I can only express my dismay at the recklessness with which the Christian case is sometimes staked on experience alone. It is a combination of historical proof with the argument from experience which alone can bear the weight.

A second limitation of experience is to be found in its mixed origin and character. It is not simple but complex and many factors have gone to its making. The Christian life is created and fostered by the Divine action, but the Divine is inevitably coloured and limited by the human. Elements which we contribute mingle with those that have their source in the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. It is the play of innumerable forces, many of them hardly guessed by us, which has made us what we are. We must beware therefore of resting a weight on our experience which it will not bear, or we may even surround with a halo our own foibles and eccentricities. We escape to a certain extent from these dangers when we permit the experience of others to enlarge and correct our own. It is true that we cannot be content with a second-hand experience. Our relationship to God must be immediate and direct. It is also true that the soul's

secrets are largely incommunicable, and the most brilliant combination of psychological analysis with gift of expression inevitably leaves the deepest things unsaid. But when all this has been admitted it remains true that for our own profit we do well to enrich and expand our own spiritual life by communion with rarer and riper spirits, while it is imperative that when we use experience as an instrument of verification we should understand it in its collective rather than in its individual sense. I must be able to say what Christ has meant to me—otherwise my testimony loses its note of authenticity and conviction and the intimate glow of feeling which gathers about the most cherished possession. But if I am to press on others the argument from experience, or if I seek to find the Bible mirrored and verified in experience, I must interpret this in the largest way, humbly conscious how narrow at the best is the reflection my own life can give.

What then can experience do for us? It is in the first place the indispensable complement of history. If, after we have studied the historical evidence, we reach the conclusion that Jesus was what the Church claims Him to have been, and did what she claims Him to have done, that conclusion itself will not be long maintained unless experience continually reaffirms it. For if the proof from experience has its limitations, so also, as every historical critic knows only too well, has the argument from history. Left alone neither can bear the weight of the Christian case. Locked into an arch where each supports the other we can securely trust our faith to them. Experience corroborates the testimony of history to the Divinity of Christ and the redeeming quality of His work. In the next place, the religious experience is in itself a fact for which an explanation must be found. It is with no mere individual nor even with a group that we are

concerned, otherwise hallucination, individual or collective, might be a reasonable explanation. But in the vast experience of Christendom we are dealing with facts as real as any which are investigated by the scientist or the historian, and which require some great and worthy cause. Moreover this specifically Christian experience has been associated with a high view of Christ's Person and Work. When these have been abandoned, the experience tends to die out and the enthusiasm to die down. From the inseparable connexion of the fact with the doctrine we cannot strictly infer the truth of the latter, but at least we are strongly predisposed to accept it. In view, however, of the fact that this experience is associated with very different theories, or with theories of the most rudimentary kind, we cannot regard it as verifying more than the general doctrine. In other words, we cannot build on it any developed Christology or any

particular theory of the Atonement. Again, while experience is largely incommunicable and therefore comes with its note of immediate assurance only to him who receives it, yet his testimony as to his experience is calculated to impress and win those who are without. At this point also a qualification may be made which we are sometimes tempted to overlook. A Church that has been created by a revival, in which conversion has meant that for a large number of its members the continuity of life has been violently ruptured, tends to state and to go on stating the doctrine of assurance in a one-sided way. The old and the new are set in sharp and definite opposition, and the experience of the new life is made all the more vivid by the shock of contrast with the old. The danger is that this should come to be regarded as that which is alone legitimate. And thus on the one side Christians fall into the sin of censoriousness, while on the other side the

incautious presentation of the doctrine depresses anxious and scrupulous souls. As a corrective to this we must always keep well to the front our objective tests. On the other hand we must insist that the Divinely appointed conditions are faithfully observed on the human side and leave with God the responsibility for the Divine response. I might add that the doctrine of assurance is a subject which more than most needs judicious handling, and more than most, perhaps, has suffered from the want of it. What is most mischievous in the Christian life is unreality, and where this takes the form of a manufactured consciousness in obedience to the exigencies of a theory, the gravest harm is done to the spiritual development. No man has the right to make his personal experience normal for all the children of God, and the witness of the Spirit, like all His holy and saving operations, may not assume in each the same form. That the tempera-

ment and previous training of the man may condition the precise form it takes is clear. In some it will be more objective in its character than in others.

In what I have said about the Bible and about experience I have to some extent anticipated the consideration of the question how far one is verified by the other. One or two further points demand a few words. Experience may first be verified by repetition. But repetition may be false or true. As false repetition I must reckon the imitation of Christ as it has been often practised. Quite apart from the fact that Christ is the Redeemer, and we the redeemed, He the Master and we the servants, the painful imitation of Him is the mark of a servile temper which has not risen to the liberty of the children of God. Nor do we necessarily reproduce the apostolic type. It is not our aim to restore primitive Christianity, but to fill our own very different conditions with the same

spirit. It is the glory of this spirit that it is so fluid and so flexible, that it has a Protean variety of incarnation. There is need of all types, and in each type of much charity towards the rest. So much, indeed, we may learn from primitive Christianity. There was no apostolic type, there were several types. It is natural that many of us should feel the Pauline type to be the most congenial. Yet since it has pleased God that other types should be represented in the classical documents of our faith, we do well to nourish ourselves on these also. Genuine Christianity must be discerned in very divergent forms. It varies from age to age. Within the same age there is wide divergence of groups, within groups there is divergence between individuals.

The individual verifies the New Testament by the immediate response which it awakes within him. The tones struck by these ancient writers set our own heart-

strings in sympathetic vibration. It is verified also by the course of our own spiritual history. We may feel, indeed, that our experience is sadly lacking in the intensity which we find in the New Testament, and that there are expressions of it which would have seemed too daring for us to use had we not the warrant which it supplies. Yet with all its shortcomings we may claim that the witness in the heart answers to the witness of the Word. And this argument becomes much more impressive when we turn from the personal to the collective experience. The existence of the Canon is to some extent a proof that the writings had been verified. Of course this statement needs qualification, for there were other criteria of canonicity, and there is a fringe as to which doubt may be legitimately entertained. But the margin of uncertainty is neither large nor important. We should have in the New Testament all we want, even if books

whose canonicity has been widely doubted were excluded from it, although the exclusion of the Epistle to the Hebrews would greatly impoverish the New Testament. Moreover, we may thankfully admit that a book is in its right place in the Bible, and yet recognise that it secured that place on grounds which we must regard as false or inadequate. But looking at the matter broadly, the creation of the Canon is one of the most impressive examples of the response given by experience to Revelation. The Church did not write the Bible, but in a sense she guarantees it. The Church found in the New Testament the record of an earlier experience. There she read the record of what the primitive Church had found Christ to be. And age after age, as she studies that record, she is conscious that here she has the classical expression of what in her turn she has proved Christ to be.

It may, indeed, be urged that much

which we claim for the New Testament may also be claimed for other Christian literature. Why should we attach a value to certain parts of the New Testament or even of the Old exceeding that which we attach to some of the finest monuments of the eloquence, the consecration, and the insight into Christian truth, which the later ages of Christendom have produced? Why should we deny to some of our great Christian hymns, which move us profoundly as we sing them, a rank which we accord to many a composition in the Old Testament, that seems to stand on a lower level and moves us far less deeply? Our great books of devotion, our masterpieces of theology, our prayers, our hymns, they too register experience to which we respond. But they are largely secondary and derivative, the New Testament is primary and classical. And from the best which the non-canonical literature of Christendom has to offer us, we turn to the Bible to

gain an ever-renewed sense of its uniqueness, of its inexpressible value. It is a light whose radiance illumines our way, while its glow cheers our hearts. It has something to fit our varied individualities and our changing moods. It is, indeed, the river that makes glad and sweet the city of God, a river with clear shallows and unfathomed depths, reflecting now the bright untroubled sky and now the dark and lurid thunder-cloud, bathing our tired spirits in its warmth and softness, or bracing them by the rigour of its cold, moving here in a great stillness, and there in a rushing flood, cleansing us from our defilement, reviving us as we drink its life-giving waters, bearing us on its broad bosom through an enchanted land.

The Evangelical Faith and the Modern View of Scripture.[1]

10 THE problem created by views of Scripture which diverge from those till recently current in the Church is not, of course, a new one. For several decades it has been discussed pretty thoroughly in Great Britain, and the debate arose a good deal earlier on the Continent. But there has been recently a marked revival of activity among the opponents of the more modern view, and this makes it desirable to clear up the relation between that view and our evangelical faith. Those who reject the traditional dogma fully recognise its right

[1] Read in a slightly abbreviated form at the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, in London, September 27, 1921.

as a legitimate form of belief about the Scriptures, though they repudiate the claims to exclusive right often made for it. But in ever-widening circles this theory is rejected; and as the older generation dies out, newer views will presumably more and more prevail. I have no desire to argue at any length with which type of theory the truth really lies. Speaking for myself and multitudes of others, I do not doubt at all that the traditional view of the Bible has been definitely dislodged, and that to accept it would be for us a kind of intellectual sin against the Holy Ghost. It is therefore our duty to devise another theory which is suggested by the actual phenomena and attempts to do justice to them. Naturally this is a more laborious task than to spin an a priori hypothesis and impose it on the phenomena, however glaring the misfit. The practical issue before us is whether a view of Scripture can be formulated which, while loyal to the results of research, is not

inconsistent with our evangelical faith.

The contrast between the two positions is too familiar to need detailed statement, but a brief description is necessary. The traditional view among Protestants in Great Britain took the Bible to consist of the books included in our English Bible as commonly circulated, that is, excluding the Apocrypha. These books, in their original languages and in the form given to them by their authors, were sharply marked off from all other books by a quality known as inspiration which was peculiar to them. This might be defined in a more or less rigid way, but it was generally agreed that the writers were the penmen of the Holy Ghost who, whatever freedom might be left to the human agents, exercised such a constant and vigilant control that they were secured from error and Divinely controlled, alike in the selection of their matter and in the form in which it was written. Even where the existence of error was allowed as an abstract

possibility, it was likely to be denied in any given case. The action of corruption on our text could not, of course, be denied; and this allowed, as a refuge for those who asserted inerrancy, the explanation that real errors, if such existed, were due to corruption of the text, and that the autographs, if they had been accessible, would have been free from them. The traditional ascription of books to certain authors was as a rule strenuously affirmed, especially in cases where the documents themselves made the claim, or the authorship was asserted or implied in other parts of Scripture, in particular by Christ or the New Testament writers.

As against this we have a general theory of Scripture which is very different. Far greater scope is given to the human factor alike in initiative and in execution. There is a full recognition of the large range of difference in spiritual value or historical accuracy to be found within the canonical

books ; of the approximation between parts of the canonical literature and non-canonical sacred books ; the repudiation on a large scale of traditional beliefs as to the authorship, unity, and date of individual writings ; a clear perception of the uncertainties in which the determination of the Canon was involved.

In considering the situation thus created, it must be remembered that the cleavage is not to be identified with that between old and new theology. It has not been unknown for a very free theology to be associated with adhesion to traditional views on critical problems, while a conservative theology is not infrequently combined with an advanced critical position. It is accordingly not the case that surrender of the older view is necessarily dictated by reasons drawn from another sphere and imposed on the attitude adopted towards Scripture. It really springs from a consideration of the phenomena presented by

Scripture itself. Every special science must be allowed to work by the methods proper to it, and to reach its own results without external dictation. It is not for any special science to formulate a general view of the universe ; but it is entitled to carry through its own investigations unfettered, and to insist that its results shall have their full weight in determining the final synthesis. It lies in the very nature of an investigation that it shall be scrupulous in discovering and registering all the relevant facts. It must not be biased in the selection of the material or guide the presentation of the evidence towards any desire for predetermined results. Scholars of different schools need this reminder. If the traditionalists constantly make the impression that they are determined at all hazards to establish the older views, it is also true that some scholars start with the postulate that miracle cannot happen.

My purpose is not primarily negative or

controversial, but I ought at least to indicate the reasons which have led to rejection of the traditional view. The causes, which have brought about its abandonment by many evangelical theologians, are not to be sought in any hostility to the Bible or love of novelty for its own sake, or leaning to rationalism. The phenomena presented by Scripture are in their judgment inconsistent with the older theories whether in a strict or a "rectified" form. Conscious of the large measure of uncertainty which frequently surrounds the text itself, they cannot understand why, when such care was taken, as is asserted, to secure inerrancy in the autographs, no care seems to have been taken to preserve that inerrancy in the copies of the Scriptures actually used by the Church. They are aware that the limits of the Canon have fluctuated and that the line between canonical and uncanonical cannot be drawn with precision or with confidence. The evidence for critical analysis of docu-

ments and the denial of traditional affirmations of authorship and date they feel to be cogent. They feel the difficulties created by discrepancies of statement within the literature itself, and by the task of reconciliation with the results of scientific, archæological and historical research. They are impressed with the obscurity which hangs over many passages, with the uncertainties of exegesis which constantly range interpreters in opposite camps, and in particular with the grave issues raised by the science of Biblical Theology. They recognise the problem created by the ascription to the Holy Spirit of what their better feelings assure them to be unworthy of Him. These difficulties we are not entitled to ignore, and they are fatal to the traditional theory. To insist that the older view must be maintained in its integrity, or that Christianity itself must be surrendered, is to limit the possibilities in an illegitimate way, and to risk an intolerable strain on

faith which no one should lightly incur. It is natural that those who approach the Scriptures with rationalistic prepossessions should reject the traditional dogma of Scripture; but that does not justify the illogical inference that such rejection is incompatible with a loyal acceptance of the full evangelical faith.

It is, of course, true that all unprejudiced investigation has its risks. It is conceivable that its results may be fatal to faith. We cannot accept the well-meant but cowardly advice that we should decline to imperil our faith by a scrutiny of the grounds on which it rests. The position is indeed easier with reference to the Old Testament than to the New Testament; though even here it is necessary to face the problem created by the attitude of Jesus to the Old Testament. So far as the New Testament is concerned, the problem is much more acute, for it contains the classical documents of our religion. And the issues raised by

the indissoluble alliance of Christianity with history are very grave. They cannot be evaded by treating the historical element as detachable without injury to the religion. But the inclusion of historical events as indispensable to the religion does mean that historical inquiry with all its uncertainties must play freely upon the documents and the facts they narrate. And such inquiry must be genuine and unfettered, not directed to the attainment of a desired goal. Mystical experiences, however vivid, cannot in the nature of the case attest the reality of historical events, though they have a very important place in the case for Christianity.

But it is not all the facts recorded in the Gospels which are vital to Christianity. It is well to begin in a modest way and inquire whether we have the minimum. That minimum I take to include the historical existence of Jesus, an adequate impression of His personality, His teaching

and His work, His death, and His triumph over death. This minimum seems to me critically secure, and most evangelical Christians would feel themselves assured of a great deal more. But, of course, faith needs more than bare facts; the facts must be interpreted and valued, otherwise we have no Gospel to preach. This is provided for us in the New Testament; but, here also, difficult problems confront us as to the harmony of the various interpretations with themselves and with each other, and above all their agreement with the mind of Christ. Here, too, I think that we may claim to have the necessary minimum which faith requires. With the central interests of faith thus secured, we are in a position to occupy more and more of the old territory, and we are also able to form a truer estimate of our sacred literature. In particular it is along this line that we may perhaps best approach the difficult question of our attitude to the Old Testament. In his

large and very important work on Marcion, recently published, Harnack has expressed the view that while in the second century it was an error rightly repudiated by the great Church to reject the Old Testament, to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the Reformation could not as yet escape, but to preserve it as a canonical document in Protestantism, since the nineteenth century, is the result of ecclesiastical and religious paralysis. The value of the Old Testament he freely allows, but refuses to grant it canonical rank alongside of the New Testament. Our judgment of this position will naturally be modified by the significance we attach to the idea of canonicity. But two reasons seem to demand the retention of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. One is the attitude adopted towards it by Jesus Himself; the other is the fact that it stands in organic connexion with the New Testament, large sections of which would be unintelligible

without it. In other words, those who recognise in Jesus a Divine revelation ought to regard it as the climax of a long process, the record of which is preserved for us in the Old Testament.

This brings us then to the question What is revelation? The popular conception is that it is the disclosure by God of religious and moral truths which man could not reach by his unaided powers. I do not deny, of course, that such truths are given in our Scriptures. But we are on the wrong track when we put the emphasis on ideas, even ideas about God. It is not correct ideas that revelation is primarily designed to give, but the actual knowledge of God Himself. Had right conceptions on theology and ethics been the primary object of revelation, the Bible would have been an entirely different book from what it is. Revelation, it cannot be said too emphatically, and repeated too often, is a process in history. In saying this I am not thinking

primarily of what is familiar to us as the progressive nature of revelation. I mean that history is the chosen medium through which God has revealed Himself. Through outstanding events in the nation's history, acts of deliverance or of chastisement, the people not only learnt truths about the character of their God, they were brought into contact with God Himself. And what was true of the chosen nation was true in a far fuller degree of elect personalities. Their individual history was for them a medium through which they came into that fellowship with God in which they learnt to know God Himself and not simply truths about Him. Had we been consulted, we should naturally have suggested another way which would have left no loop-hole for error and would have been limited to a compact and lucid statement of religious and moral truths. But abstract correctness, clear-cut and precise definition, and brevity which would not have unduly taxed our

fitful attention or feeble memories, would have been purchased at a ruinous price. Life alone is the adequate revelation of personality, and in our mortal sphere it is the highest, the most flexible, the least inadequate medium for God's self-disclosure.

There is then in the history of Israel and the religious experience of elect personalities a unique action of God. The people was chosen just as it was, uncongenial and at times intractable, with a crass theology, a rudimentary religion, a slave morality. It reached in a few centuries the loftiest pinnacle attained by any pre-Christian religion; and by the contrast between its lowly origin and its amazing achievement we measure the unique and tremendous energy with which the Spirit of God was at work within it. We realise this most fully as we think of the great men, prophets, psalmists and sages, who spoke out of the depth of a great spiritual experience, and

with first-hand knowledge of God. This movement found its climax in Jesus, who summed up all that was best and greatest in it, transcended it and perfected it. But while He Himself rose out of Israel and in Him the long upward process reached its climax and attained its goal, He was not simply, as His predecessors, a part of the process, the last link of a long chain. For He was not merely the perfect flower of our humanity, the supreme achievement revealing the hitherto undreamed-of possibilities of our nature. He is not man's last best word to God, but God's last best word to man, who came less to tell us about God than to live the life and express the nature of God, so far as was possible, in the limits of our human experience. With His life, crowned by death, the long process of revelation was complete.

We see then what is meant by the statement that the Bible is the record of revelation. It is not the revelation itself. That

was given through history and experience, in life and personality. But a record of it was needed that it might be preserved for posterity, and this we have in the Bible. Inasmuch as the process started from a very low level and moved slowly upward, we are not surprised to find these lower stages reflected in the literature. It would, indeed, have been untrue to its great purpose if they had been omitted. But while a larger place was left for the human factor in the making of the record than we might have anticipated, we must recognise that the record is adequate for its purpose, and be grateful that God has given us all we are entitled to expect. It was necessary, however, for the meaning of the history to be made clear, and this need was met by divinely-gifted men, who were sensitive to the spiritual forces at work beneath the surface and the far-reaching plan which controlled the movement of events. We have then the double process

of revelation and interpretation, and the record of this is contained in Scripture. It lies in the nature of the case that supreme value and authority attaches to the final stage in the process ; but the whole movement has permanent significance, and the New Testament did not make the Old Testament obsolete. By this I do not mean that we are to place it on the same level or to imagine that it really says the same thing as the Gospel only in an obscure and roundabout way. Even the greatest lights of Israel turn pale in the presence of the Light of the world, and we are living not according to the Law but under the control of the indwelling Spirit. But fragmentary and incomplete, marred by the imperfections and impoverished by the limitations of the medium, yet the process of revelation in Israel is organically one with the revelation in God's only begotten Son, and he who would understand the climax aright must retrace with patient

care the long and steep ascent by which it was finally reached.

It will, I hope, be clear that criticism is rendered imperative by the very nature of Scripture. That it comes to us in writing necessitates the Lower Criticism which purges the text of errors and seeks to restore it to its original form. That it records a movement from stage to stage necessitates Higher Criticism so that the documents may be arranged in their true chronological order. That history was its medium necessitates a knowledge of the history that we may understand the revelation, and this involves the use of Historical Criticism.

Taken just as it stands, without the application of any critical method, the Bible itself is an amazing fact overwhelming in the impression of Divine qualities which it makes upon us. But he is in the best position to appreciate its excellence who, having worked his way through the problems of criticism and

exegesis and absorbed their results, has risen above laborious study and preoccupation with details once more to contemplate the literature as the mighty monument of the long process of revelation and redemption.

The Place of the Gospel in the Preaching of To-day[1]

11 When we speak of the Gospel what do we mean? The term bears so many senses. A friend of mine once heard an eminent Calvinistic preacher in a Wesleyan Chapel, which, as the largest building in the town, had been secured to accommodate the anticipated crowd. The preacher began his discourse with the remark, "You don't often hear the Gospel in this place but you shall hear it to-day." So he unfolded the scheme of truth as he understood it, beginning with predestination and closing with final perseverance. It is not in any such specialised sense, how-

[1] Read at the National Free Church Council, Swansea, 1909.

ever, that in an assembly like this the topic should be debated. Yet the term is used in so many meanings that it is well to clear the mind by a reference to these. To some it will suggest the whole complex of traditional theology. Others mean by it the so-called plan of salvation; or identify it with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, often with special emphasis on it as the message of social regeneration. Others, again, will limit it to the teaching of Jesus as distinguished from those doctrines of Christ's Person and Work in the Epistles which are regarded as an illegitimate accretion. It is not possible to discuss these conceptions—a few words must suffice. It is not wise to identify the Gospel with traditional theology, for not only would several competing systems claim the common title, but traditional theology contains elements which are foreign to the Gospel, or at least appendages to it rather than integral parts of it. To define it

as the plan of salvation would be unduly to narrow it, and the conception is itself unfortunate. The representation of the glad tidings as a plan is too mechanical, rigid, and formal. There is a danger of reducing the Gospel too much to a series of transparent formulæ from which all mystery has evaporated and about which there clings no aroma of rich suggestion. To explain everything, to have no sense of unfathomable depths, is the mark of the theological charlatan. Nor yet is the Gospel a scheme of social reform. It is true that social reform is a practical corollary from our fundamental doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. But agreement upon this point is compatible with the sharpest difference of conscientious opinion on the lines which practical reform should take. It is an evil day for any Church when it pledges its Gospel to any form of economic theory or political constitution. And, however plausibly it may be

argued that the lofty conceptions of Christ's Person and Work which are to be found in the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel are alien from the teaching of Christ, we have definitely taken our stand on these conceptions. We do not consider the Gospel as a republication of Natural Religion, nor yet merely as the flower of Judaism. For us Jesus can never be simply the Revealer of new truths—our emphasis lies on what He was and did even more than on what He said. Jesus was an integral part of His own Gospel. He did not simply discover the Way and invite men to walk with Him, nor proclaim the Truth and call them to share it, nor yet disclose the spring of Life and summon them to join Him in drinking its vitalising waters. He was all of these in His own Person, it was Himself that He offered to mankind. For us it is not true that Paul with his doctrine of Christ and His work started the Church down the fatal slope of mythology.

What, then, is the Gospel? It is not simply a set of ideas or scheme of doctrine, nor is it simply a series of facts. It embraces both, but it combines them inseparably with a Person. The element which differentiates Christianity from other religions is Christ Himself. He was Himself the main contribution which He made to religion. We do not agree with those who tell us that the Christological development in the Church has worked incalculable mischief. With all the blunders and worse than blunders, with all the over-refinement of speculation, with all the tendency to shift the centre of gravity from personal experience of the power of Christ to correct views concerning His Person, we ought not to close our eyes to the fact that the Church had to make good its theory of Christ's Person if it was to secure the Gospel with which it had been entrusted. In making its theology Christocentric it obeyed an inevitable impulse which had

been communicated to it by its experience of its Founder and was sanctioned by His teaching.

And when I speak of our interpretation of the Gospel as Christocentric, I would urge that this should not be too narrowly interpreted. I think we ought not to concentrate attention so exclusively on the Cross, that we belittle the theological significance of the Incarnation, the life, the ministry and the resurrection of Christ. Jesus was not born simply that He might die ; and, although in one sense we cannot emphasise that experience too much we may emphasise it too exclusively. The danger of those who are endowed with exceptional intensity of vision for one side of the truth is that they pay for it by their inability to give due regard to other sides of truth, sometimes even by the temptation to deny that these exist. Hence I prefer to regard the Gospel as Christocentric rather than Staurocentric, if I may

coin the term, understanding, of course, that any truly Christocentric theology will attach a very high significance to the Cross.

In the light of what I have just said it will be clear that I could not assent to the old-fashioned view that the plan of salvation should be in every sermon. No doubt there was one very cogent argument in favour of that maxim. The preacher it was felt, should never take the risk of permitting anyone whose only chance that might be of hearing the Gospel message to leave the church without an opportunity of learning the way of redemption. But it is quite clear that incessant dwelling upon the theme would make the average ministry one of intolerable tedium and defeat the very purpose which the preacher had in view. Moreover, it is not the case that the object of the preacher is merely to bring men to Christ. It is important that men should become Christians, but of almost equal importance is the question,

What kind of Christians are they to be? One of the most urgent concerns of the preacher is to secure a richness and depth of spiritual life in his congregation, morality of high distinction, a grave sense of responsibility. Now it is true that much may be done by a wise minister, who takes his work with due seriousness, through other channels than his preaching: by meetings of a specifically devotional character and by pastoral visitation, the neglect of which is the most serious defect in the work of not a few ministers. The genius may be justified in exclusive concentration on the pulpit; the normal minister who desires only to be a preacher is not worthy to be a preacher. But when all this is said, the truth remains that much of this work of building up the religious life of his people must be done by the minister in the pulpit, and his sermons therefore must have a much wider range than the view I am discussing will admit. Moreover, even the

much larger range of subjects which would be included in a ministry which was Christo-centric rather than Staurocentric, would not cover all the topics with which the minister ought to deal. At the same time, the old formula had an element of truth in it. In every sermon there ought to be a distinctively Christian element, and where the Person or Work of Christ is not the main theme, care should be taken that these are made prominent in other parts of the service, and that not only in the prayers but especially in the hymns. It ought to be inconceivable that a Christian service should take place in which Christ should be excluded from the hymns sung by the congregation. From such services, when it has been my misfortune to attend them, I have gone away chilled. The great theistic hymns have their place in our worship; but the hymns which move us most profoundly are the hymns which are definitely Christian.

The case of the missioner is of course special. It is definitely his task to secure the great decision. He has his own peculiar perils and needs an exceptional measure of the grace of God if he is not to deteriorate in his work. On some of these perils it is not my duty to dwell.[1] But there are some points which are strictly relevant to my theme. The causes which lead to success are so complex that the missioner may easily trace his own success to the wrong cause. He may believe that his special

[1] I have spoken explicitly on these in a paper *Evangelism and the Intellectual Influences of the Age*, contributed to the volume *Evangelism: a Re-Interpretation*, edited by the Rev. E. Aldom French. As my contribution has been singled out by various reviewers for pained or bitter protest, I may be permitted to reply that I adhere to everything I said; I set down nothing in malice; I had grounds for my strictures; I felt strongly that there were things that needed to be said, and that I ought not to shirk the task of saying them, to avoid the odium that my frankness would excite. I wrote as one who desires for genuine evangelism a future even more splendid and fruitful than its past.

presentation of the Gospel is vindicated by the results. But it is also possible that he wins them in spite of imperfections in his statement. The grace of God works through very imperfect statements of redeeming truth. For example, no amount of success proves the correctness of the missioner's theory of the Atonement. It demonstrates the great fact that Christ is the Redeemer through belief on whom the sinner may be saved. But in the nature of the case it can prove only the fact of the Atonement and not the particular explanation. Now, it would not be worth while dwelling on this if a mere matter of theory were involved. But the issue is much more serious, for there is the danger that those who would accept Christ as their Saviour may be repelled by their inability to accept the theory which the missioner has insisted on identifying with the Gospel. Again we have to recognise the fact that there are many

people whom the mission preacher or the evangelistic address would never reach, because they are kept from Christ, not by love of sin, by indifference to religion, or by self-will, though all of these causes operate on great masses of the population. Those of whom I am thinking are held back because they are not prepared to grant the speculative and historical premises which the revivalist pre-supposes. Now, the qualities which make the successful revivalist are not those which make the successful apologist ; and it is an urgent necessity that the Gospel should be presented in such a way that its intellectual difficulties should no longer seem insuperable. It would be unreasonable to expect the missioner to know the problems and the real pressure of difficulties, to have an eye for strategic points, to understand what positions have become untenable, or how the citadel may be best defended. We ought not to speak without sympathy

of those who cling tenaciously to the faith taught them at their mother's knee. But God has laid it on the hearts of some of us to care for those to whom that faith has become incredible, but whom we may perhaps be permitted to win, at least for what is essential in that earlier belief. I will add that it is very desirable that in his difficult and delicate work the apologist should not be hampered by suspicion, wounded by assaults from his brethren, or even stung by their pin-pricks. In a time of theological flux we need the utmost forbearance with each other. We should seek to be free from censoriousness and purge ourselves from the lust of mutual excommunication.

We need, in our presentations of the Gospel in our pulpit, both the teacher and the prophet. And if, as a layman, I may venture to offer advice to preachers who are younger than myself, I would urge them to bear the following points in mind :

The basis of the sermon should be soundly exegetical. The preacher should not be shy of great texts, for at any rate this would ensure that the people would have something to reward them for coming, and no minister can rise to greatness unless great themes are those most congenial to him. The preacher should aim at balance and proportion, and be very tolerant of types other than his own. If he strikes for the centre he is sure not to be too wide of the mark. When he finds that the best of his old sermons move him no longer as he delivers them, it is time to print them or put them on the fire. His sermons will gain immeasurably if he has a sense of style. He should certainly be sparing with the language of Canaan, but he should hold its provincial dialects in utter abhorrence. Who shall tell us the number of those who have been repelled by them?

And let me emphasise the vital necessity of theological equipment. The minister

needs it for his people, since failure to ground the members of our Churches in the great truths of the Gospel is responsible for no little of the amazing bewilderment in which so many are involved to-day. And even more he needs it for himself. How pathetic the spectacle of the man who holds his position on the understanding that he is an expert in the Gospel, but who no sooner touches theology than he betrays himself by the fumbling fashion in which he handles it! It is one of the pressing duties of the pulpit to restate the essential truths of the Gospel in such a form as to commend them to the men of our own time. And while it is not, perhaps, the duty of the average minister to make theological sermons prominent in his ministry, it is essential that beneath what he says there should be the firmly-knit skeleton of theology. So as he ponders the question whether it will still be possible for him to preach the old Gospel in the light of the modern know-

ledge, he may come to learn that this is possible, if he is willing to distinguish between accidents and essentials, to have a sense of proportion and put the emphasis on the right place.

And thus, as we meditate on the deep things of the Spirit, the great fabric of our religion rises before us in stately splendour, and yet in warm and gracious beauty. The God proclaimed by our Gospel is not simply the Almighty Creator, the transcendent Sovereign, nor yet simply the immanent God who fills the whole universe with His energy, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also the Father of spirits, the God whose name is Holy and whose inmost nature is Love. It sets man before us as the son of God, made in His image, a son who has gone astray in ignorance and rebellion, and sunk to nameless abysses of sin. It speaks of evil with no honeyed words, but calls things by their right names. It shows

us man's desperate case, it views sin as a virulent disease which no balm in Gilead can heal, and which baffles the skill of the wisest physician. Yet with all its stern sense of evil, the Gospel confronts it without dismay. It has combined the gravest estimate of sin with a hope which despairs of none. It was with no superficial treatment that it grappled with the cancer; it was with sweat and agony, with shame and torture and death that the great Physician of souls won the sovereign remedy. With a love deeper than hell and mightier than death He undercut the settled dominion of evil and hurled it from its base. The note of the Gospel is paradox, the foolishness of God which is wiser than man. Victory is achieved through defeat, life through death; the Lion of the tribe of Judah is the Lamb standing as it had been slain. And it is a universal Gospel which sets at nought not only the artificial barriers created by man, but

the deeper barriers of Nature. It snaps the fetters of habit, liberates the conscience from the sense of guilt, imparts a new moral energy, satisfies man's craving for fellowship with God. It brings God down to man, that man may be lifted into union with God. It serves the cause of progress, allies itself with every agency to uplift humanity, to relieve its misery and elevate its lot. It crowns all, not with the hope, but with the triumphant assurance of immortality.

We have learnt so much that with wiser methods we ought to achieve much more. We have truer views of Scripture, if unhappily less familiarity with it, the incredible elements in popular theology are being gradually eliminated, our Divinity feels the breath of a warmer humanity, our Gospel is better than ever understood and more free from the taint of paganism. "What lack I yet?" We read the great Epistles of Paul, and across all the centuries

our heart-strings still vibrate to that thrilling note of discovery, that passionate Eureka which rings from his exulting lips. Does it spring spontaneously from ours? Far from it; if we still believe the glad message, we take it too much for granted. It has largely lost its freshness, familiarity has dulled our minds to its glory and power. The Gospel has solved its problem so completely that we have become unconscious that there was a problem to be solved. It does not electrify us with a sudden shock of surprise. Happy if in some intense and radiant moment there breaks upon us, with all the rapture of a new discovery, the amazing wonder of redemption, the inexhaustible and unsearchable riches of Christ!

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